

Shelby Stanger:

The presenting sponsor this season is Subaru. As a group of adventurers, you've probably heard of Subaru but let me tell you a bit more about one of their cars that is a fan favorite — the 2020 Subaru Forester. Here are a couple of reasons to love the Forester — let's start with something we all care about: safety. The 2020 Forester has DriverFocus Distraction Mitigation System, which helps guard against distracted driving — have more than one person driving the car? You can set it up so it recognizes up to five drivers (technology is amazing...) Next on the list is that Subaru is built to last — according to Experian Automotive, 97% of Forester vehicles sold in the last 10 years are still on the road today — it's hard to say goodbye to your Subaru. And last, but not least, is the fact that the 2020 Forester is the only non-luxury SUV that includes standard symmetrical all-wheel drive, which means better handling and a quicker response to road conditions. What's not to love about the 2020 Forester? You can learn more about everything the car has to offer at [Subaru.com](http://Subaru.com). Disclaimer: Driver Focus is a driver recognition system designed to alert the driver if their attention to the road waivers or if the driver's face appears to turn away. Driver is responsible for safe and attentive driving. System effectiveness depends on many factors. See Owner's Manual.

Shelby Stanger:

When we think of ninjas, we think of shadowy figures climbing buildings, leaping across rooftops, maybe brandishing a cool sword. But today we're talking about a different kind of ninja. Meagan Martin is a real life American Ninja Warrior. That's the name of the NBC show that Meagan has been competing on every year since 2014 where she tackles extreme obstacles with names like The Warped Wall and The Jumping Spider.

Shelby Stanger:

Over the years, American Ninja Warrior has become a platform for Meagan to share her passion for climbing. And now she has a mission to get even more kids of different backgrounds on the wall themselves. I'm Shelby Stanger, and this is Wild Ideas Worth Living. Personally, I'd say Meagan is more of a superhero than a ninja. Known to some as Mighty Meagan Martin, she's a born athlete and competitor. Meagan is totally ripped and she's been building on her strength and skills her whole life. From a childhood spent doing gymnastics to a stint doing pole vaulting through college, Meagan is mostly a climber now and her path has been a remarkably natural progression. I wasn't lying when I said she was born into it.

Shelby Stanger:

So you got your start in athletics growing up, doing gymnastics in Florida. How did you get into that?

Meagan Martin:

Both my parents were gymnasts. My dad was a collegiate gymnast and then he went to the Olympic trials. But then my mom was a gymnast as well and she started coaching gymnastics at the age of 16. And she coached all the way up until her mid 40s, I believe. Once she had me, I was in the gym right away. It was kind of like a easy thing to put me in because she was already at the gym so putting me in gymnastics made the most sense.

Shelby Stanger:

You're so lucky. That's so great. Because she it seems like the best athletes I know, like even in surfing, I'll meet these girls who've never learned to surf and they're so good right away. And they're like, "Oh, I was gymnast as a kid."

Meagan Martin:

It's definitely a great sport like any other sport, just as like a base because I think it teaches you body awareness really early, as well as you get a lot of strength early on. For example, when I started climbing, I already had ridiculous upper body strength which in girls, in general, isn't as normal. I think that helped me progress early on in climbing.

Shelby Stanger:

You're actually strong as F and it is so cool to watch really beautiful strong women just crush it in their sport. And you're one of those women.

Meagan Martin:

Why, thank you.

Shelby Stanger:

So you grew up pretty competitive then.

Meagan Martin:

Yes. Grew up really competitive from the start. I'm also one of three girls.

Shelby Stanger:

Oh, are you the youngest?

Meagan Martin:

I'm the oldest, actually.

Shelby Stanger:

Wow! Interesting.

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. I'm the oldest. We all started in gymnastics and yeah, I started doing competitions in gymnastics probably when I was like six or seven. I honestly don't even remember. I trained five days a week, four hours a day, very early on, which was quite normal. And I was actually homeschooled in elementary school. So all I really did was go to the gymnastics gym. And then I climbed a lot of trees growing up. That was when I was homeschooled, my mom used to make us read an hour a day and I would climb up into the tree to read because I thought that was more exciting.

Shelby Stanger:

Wait! Tell me about this. So you were always an outdoorsy kid and you grew up in Florida.

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. Which is kind of odd because Florida's not really the best place to be outdoorsy, necessarily, because it's so hot. It's hard to want to be outside. And then on top of that, the water sports - sure they're fun but there's alligators and snakes in the water and sharks in the ocean. There's so many things that aren't necessarily conducive to wanting to be outside. I was lucky enough to grow up... The house we moved into when I was around seven, we had a really big yard. We had so many trees and I would climb all the trees. We had a ranch style fence that was about four inches wide. My sister and I would walk around the fence, around the entire property. That was a fun little thing we would do trying to not fall.

Meagan Martin:

And then I remember at one point, some of the planks started separating. And then they would dip down a little and it was like an added obstacle we decided to keep doing. My mom's always been really chilled and never worrisome. Instead of being the mom that's like, "Don't climb up the tree, stop walking on the fence. You can't jump off that waterfall." She's like, "Yeah, go ahead and do it. Oh, by the way, you should probably backflip off the waterfall. That makes the most sense." She always encouraged us to have fun and I was never scared of that stuff, which was nice. Because I guess that's not really the norm.

Shelby Stanger:

It's not really the norm, but I think having a mom who understands what that is like to flip upside down probably was really helpful.

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. I guess that's definitely a part of it.

Shelby Stanger:

It sounds like you had a pretty fantastic childhood, which is really nice, and really supportive parents growing up in Florida. But how did you get into climbing? Because I don't think of Florida as a rock climbing mecca.

Meagan Martin:

It's definitely not the best place to get into climbing. Basically, I was a gymnast and my mom always said that with gymnastics specifically, the idea was if you saw a child with talent, you generally were trying to move them through the levels quickly because gymnastics is kind of scary, right? And the earlier you can learn skills and not be afraid of them, the better. And that's actually one of the things that made me want to quit gymnastics was I developed a fear of backwards tumbling. I spent like a year, a year and a half, dealing with this where at practice I'd have a hard time going. I'd always stop or "balk" is what we call it in gymnastics. And it was just so much, but in a competition I would always do all my skills, but it was just too much stress. And I decided that I wanted to quit gymnastics.

Meagan Martin:

And my parents... basically once I quit, my dad was like, "Okay, so you either need to find a new sport to do, or you're going to go to a tutoring center and you're going to get extremely smart because you're going to get a scholarship to college one way or the other." That was basically his plan. So I started playing soccer with a girl who quit gymnastics around the same time as me. And soccer was okay. I don't really like running a lot. So it wasn't my favorite thing. I played soccer for like one season and I happened

to go to the climbing gym with the girl who had also quit gymnastics and we were on the same soccer team. Anyway, I walked in there and I immediately fell in love. It was so much fun. And the best part was, it was 10 minutes from the gymnastics gym so my mom could drop me off before work, come pick me up like four hours later after work. And I just spent all day at the climbing gym.

Shelby Stanger:

So you find rock climbing, you absolutely fall in love, and then you start competing right away?

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. I started competing. I remember I did my first local competition at the gym and I entered in women's beginner and I won. I competed against all different ages in that competition. And I was really excited because I had done well. And then after that, I joined the climbing team, which was like six kids at the gym. Climbing teams nowadays are way more organized and they remind me more of club gymnastics, the way that they're set up nowadays. But it was very lax back then. And I remember my mom being like, "Oh, cool. Climbing, this is awesome. It's so cheap. All I have to buy you is shoes, chalk and a harness. Awesome. The team doesn't even cost that much money. This is great." Which isn't the case now. It's definitely more expensive now. But back then it was pretty cheap. So I started doing the youth competitions and I made Youth Nationals my first year for sport climbing, which, at the time I was in the 12 to 13 age group so I wasn't even lead climbing it. I was just top roping in the competition. And I got third my first year.

Shelby Stanger:

What about competitive rock climbing did you love? Because you were really good, really fast.

Meagan Martin:

I just love competition, I think because it's fun. It's a hard thing to explain, the feelings you get, the adrenaline, it's just so different and it's cool to be able to test yourself in ways that you can't just in training. And I think it teaches good life lessons. I think losing is a great life lesson and failing- I think all of that, the earlier you can get that the better, because that's life. And then obviously it feels great if you do well. All your hard work has paid off. Everything clicks. It's almost this poetic moment of everything just going perfect.

Shelby Stanger:

Can you walk me through what it's like to be at a rock climbing competition and just climb up the wall and what goes through your head and how you're responding to the crowd? Take me to that moment.

Meagan Martin:

Totally. It differs from discipline to discipline. For example, like a sport climbing competition, I feel like it always feels a little more nerve wracking because you only have one shot. You look at the route and then you start climbing and basically your goal is just to get to the top without falling because that's your only shot. I feel like in that kind of a competition, you don't really notice the crowd as much. You're so focused and present in every move you're making because you only have that one shot and breathing is something you're really paying attention to. I feel like I can always hear myself breathe more when I'm sport climbing whereas with bouldering, bouldering is different because you have multiple climbs you're going to try. And you're allowed to fall. You just have a time limit in which you need to complete something. In that case, I feel like the crowd is something that helps you more, you're more involved

with them. I feel like the vibe is just very different. You're obviously focused in the same way, but it's more exciting and it feels like more of a show.

Shelby Stanger:

All right. You like the show. Tell me about it. Why?

Meagan Martin:

Well, I've always wanted to be an actress and I feel like I am quite a performer by nature. I think for me the show is fun. So for me going into a bouldering competition, the qualifier semifinal round is so much more stressful for me because I just want to be in the show, in finals.

Shelby Stanger:

You want to be in the finals?

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. I want to be in the final because I want to do well, but I also want to make it to the final because the experience is so awesome, it's something that really gets me excited.

Shelby Stanger:

Do you crowd hype?

Meagan Martin:

Totally, totally. I communicate, I feel like, sometimes just with facial expressions and I'm definitely one that will take a second at the top to celebrate a little bit. I love the crowd. I'm a big fan of the crowd.

Shelby Stanger:

I love that Meagan considers herself such a performer. A lot of people who do these individual sports are introverted, but Meagan draws energy from other people and audiences. It's what makes her so well suited to be both a competitor and commentator on the TV show, American Ninja Warrior. If you've never seen this show, well, contestants try to complete hardcore obstacle courses as fast as possible. It looks like a ton of fun and also extremely difficult. For example, one obstacle is called The Warped Wall. It's a nearly 15 foot tall concave quarter pipe that competitors try to scale with a running start. Meagan first appeared on the show in 2014. That year she became the first female rookie ever to complete a qualifying round.

Meagan Martin:

I competed in Denver my first year and I honestly had no idea what I was doing. I got an email about the show because they were trying to get more girls to get on the show and they thought climbing girls might be a good way to go about that. And so I went to a gym a couple times prior. I had never even... I had attempted a warped wall at this one gym, but it was a really hard one. It was taller than on the show and I had almost done it multiple times, so I had never actually done it. But yeah, I remember getting to the set and it was midnight and people had crash pads and packed all these bags and I was like, "Wait, are we going to be here all night?" Someone was like, "Yeah." And I was like, "Wait, I don't think I'm prepared for this. Maybe I should go home."

Meagan Martin:

And then I decided to stay. And I almost didn't get to go because the sun was almost about to start coming up. I think I went at like 5:00 AM my first year. And the steps had frozen so they were having to use blow torches and space heaters to get them to melt. But on my first time on the show, I somehow got all the way through the qualifying course, did The Warped Wall my third try... you get like three tries only. And I was able to hit the buzzer at the end and that became a big deal. That year two other girls had done it as well. They filmed their episodes before mine was filmed, but they had both previously been on the show. So I was like the first girl to ever do it on their first try.

Shelby Stanger:

As a rookie.

Meagan Martin:

Yeah, which was wild. But then it was a big thing. It was the three of us to have hit buzzers and they did this whole thing. And once I did that, it just kept building throughout. And now I've been on the show for six years and the last year was pretty awful. I competed with an injured hamstring, which was just not smart, but a good learning moment to listen to your body and maybe not do things.

Shelby Stanger:

How does someone train for American Ninja Warrior? Those obstacles are amazing but they're hard to replicate. What do you do?

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. They are really hard to replicate. And some people are a little luckier than others if they're by a gym that has a lot of stuff. When I lived in Colorado, the first couple of years there was a parkour gym that had some stuff that I would go to. But then that one closed down. Then I would drive like an hour to this gym in Castle Rock that had a lot of really good obstacles. And then this guy I knew owned a concrete business. And he had built in the basement of his concrete business a bunch of obstacles which I would go to. Those were always a little more sketchy. Every time I went there, I at least had a scrape. At least. And one time, one time I actually fell through a trampoline and got that hook caught on my inner thigh. I have the worst scar from it. It was disgusting.

Shelby Stanger:

Oh, your poor thing.

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. Super sketch, but like, whatever is worth it. But now the closest gym to me is like an hour and a half away. It makes it kind of difficult. But luckily with climbing, it's definitely helpful. I never really have to worry so much about upper body stuff. I just generally always like a month before I film I might start trying to do obstacle stuff like once a week.

Shelby Stanger:

But how do you find these obstacles? Aren't they pretty specific to the show?

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. You just have to find a gym. It's tricky though because there aren't as many as you would think. Even when a gym builds them, they're not perfect replications. It's similar to climbing where it's like you're just practicing a bunch of movements hoping that it prepares you enough for whatever they throw at you because climbing is the same way. You're practicing for a possibility, you're not practicing for something specific. It's so different from gymnastics where everything is so routine and you've got it so dialed. It's more like you need to make sure you have enough coordination to do like a double clutch in climbing or in Ninja Warrior to make sure you can run across something quickly or...

Shelby Stanger:

And jump.

Meagan Martin:

And yeah, jumping, trampolines. People have... usually if you were never a gymnast, you have issues with trampoline. So that's a good thing to work on.

Shelby Stanger:

It looks so fun and so scary. Tell me what it's like being up there.

Meagan Martin:

For me, the first year was the best year because there were no expectations. Now it's like I'm always so nervous. I swear before I get on top of that stage, I am moments from tears because I'm so nervous. It's funny. I like to sit there and I talk to myself and I'm like, "Okay, you can do this. This is fun. You're having fun. You're good at this. You know what to do." I just give myself positive mantras before I go because I'm really so nervous because... And it's not even about the course. This just goes back to my personality. It's like I don't want to let anybody down, which is silly, but I don't want to mess up. And that's embarrassing to me. And so I need to just get over that. But that's my own thing. But once you get on the stage... and once I'm through the first obstacle then I'm good, I'm excited to do the next one. And hopefully I have a plan and everything works out. But I'm pretty much really nervous until I'm through that first obstacle.

Shelby Stanger:

What's it like with all these people watching you?

Meagan Martin:

It's scary, especially because at this point people know me from the show, so then they actually know what's happening and they're yelling my name and all of that stuff, which is really cool. It's awesome. But then I'm also nervous.

Shelby Stanger:

What do you say to yourself when you're nervous and you just keep going? Or do you eventually zone out?

Meagan Martin:

Once I'm running, once I'm through that first obstacle, I don't really notice it anymore. I notice my sideline people. But that's okay because I think they're helpful. Like my friends and family, they're

helpful on the side talking to me. But even so, sometimes I can't even hear what they're saying. I remember last year, my friend Brian was trying to tell me something and I literally... I never heard him. Even though he was clearly shouting at me, but I was so in the zone I didn't hear him.

Shelby Stanger:

I've read that you're big on being both feminine and strong. And it's so interesting to me that you paint your nails in the one sport where your nails would get absolutely trashed the most often.

Meagan Martin:

I know, with climbing? That's why, like thank goodness for gel because it lasts so much longer.

Shelby Stanger:

Tell me about being both feminine and strong and what that means to you.

Meagan Martin:

Even when I was growing up, I don't think the idea of being strong as a woman was considered beautiful like it is now. I think that we've evolved so much and the world has finally realized that women can be strong and fit and still be considered beautiful. And they can also still be feminine. There's this idea that athletic women are tomboys, which is also true sometimes, but it's not the only way that an athletic woman can be. For me, I've always liked dressing up and doing my nails and doing my hair and my makeup for a competition. For competitions, I look at it as a performance. So I'm always trying to look my best. And I feel like when you feel good about how you are presenting yourself, you're going to also perform better. Whatever gives you the confidence.

Meagan Martin:

A lot of the nail painting that I did when I was younger, I was like, I would paint my nails the day before a competition because I was freaking out about the impending competition, but it would take my mind off of it doing that, like, just task of painting my nails and relax me. And same with doing my makeup in the morning before a competition. There's something about it that just takes my mind completely off of what's about to happen and lets me just worry about making myself look pretty or whatnot.

Shelby Stanger:

Meagan celebrates her femininity and challenges typically gendered ideas of what it means to be strong. When she's competing, she's under a ton of pressure to perform, but she's also totally comfortable being herself, painted nails and all, in front of millions of viewers. Unfortunately, it's been a lot harder to gather the kind of crowd Meagan thrives in front of since the COVID-19 pandemic hit. When we return, we'll catch up with Meagan about how she's keeping active under quarantine and how she wants to make climbing more accessible to more people.

Shelby Stanger:

Here at Wild Ideas Worth Living, we're big fans of taking the path less traveled. And when it comes to chasing down audacious dreams, we found it helps to have a pair of trusty sandals that go the distance. One of our faves, the new Universal Trail sandal from Teva. Born on the shores of the Grand Canyon in 1984, Teva has always encouraged exploration. They've injected the same trailblazing spirit into their



newest sport sandal. Crafted with quick dry materials and a comfortable foot hugging REPREVE lining, the sandals' versatile Vibram outsole can tackle any terrain, from sidewalk to switch back.

Shelby Stanger:

But the best part, starting in 2020, a hundred percent of Teva's iconic straps are made using recycled plastic, reducing environmental impact so future generations are free to explore. That's over 9,000,000 plastic bottles kept out of landfills and put to better use by strapping sandals to your feet. Keep an eye out for the Universal Trail sandal this spring with select colors available exclusively at REI or on rei.com.

Shelby Stanger:

Before the break we established what a bad ass rock climbing ninja woman Meagan Martin is on stage and off. But even bad asses have been affected by the global pandemic. So I wanted to see how Meagan's life has been impacted by COVID-19 seeing as she's unable to attend events and perform in front of crowds the way she was used to.

Meagan Martin:

I was getting ready to go commentate Sport and Speed Nationals literally right before March 13th, 14th was the weekend that event was supposed to happen. And that's when everything started changing in the US so I found out that week the event was canceled. All of that stuff just halted and then American Ninja Warrior, usually we film at the beginning of spring. Actually the first filming city was supposed to be March 13th, 14th weekend as well. And that got postponed. Everyone's just sitting in limbo in terms of events. I model sometimes too. And I feel like all of that stuff changed. I just found myself in a perpetual limbo state and home for the first time in a while for a long time. Usually I'm home for maybe like three weeks to four weeks at most, and now it's been three months. I had to change what I was doing and get a little more creative.

Meagan Martin:

On the bright side, eventually climbing became something that was more accessible outdoors. At the beginning of quarantine it wasn't because there were different rules involved with travel and whatnot, or how much you could drive in the state. But that opening up has been really helpful for my mental state and having other things to focus on in the meantime. We built a climbing wall in the backyard, which was really great. Yeah. It was really nice to have that as well. And yeah, the first week of quarantine was rough. I'm sure most people felt this and it was like this unknown. We didn't know how long we'd be sitting at home, how long we'd be out of work. That first week I just binge watched TV and freaked out about the virus. And then after that I was like, "Got to pull it together. I have to do something else." And I started doing these HIIT workouts and that was my first entree back into a routine.

Shelby Stanger:

That's pretty normal that all of us binged on Netflix. And some of us still are. And that's totally okay. It's a really weird time. But you said you got into these HIIT workouts. Just tell us when you do these HIIT workouts, what does that look like and why do you do it for your sport?

Meagan Martin:

For climbing, I feel like it's hard to get cardio just climbing. And I don't really like running, even though I used to be a pole vaulter. I think people talk about a runner's high all the time. Never felt it. It always

feels like I'm dying the entire time. It's just really not for me. I'll do it if I have to, but I prefer not to. And with the HIIT workouts, the high intensity interval training workouts, I feel like the way they can be broken up makes them feel like they're getting done faster and you'd get such a good workout in a short amount of time. And I like that feeling.

Meagan Martin:

When you start, it's usually about like 25, 30 minutes of a workout and at the beginning it might seem like you have a long way to go. And then all of a sudden you're halfway through the workout. And the way I've been doing them, I do four blocks of five minutes of work. So it's like constant work for five minutes of different plyometric exercises, ab exercises, arm exercises. And then, yeah, it's just nice to know that it doesn't take too much of my time. And then I'll be really tired at the end and I get my heart rate up. And so that's just like the goal. It's just manageable to do for me because I don't like running.

Shelby Stanger:

Are you making these workouts up on your own, or you're having a coach design them for you, or is it an online class?

Meagan Martin:

I just made them up by myself. I used to do a lot of Orangetheory classes before I hurt my hamstring last year. Because I was just starting to build up my leg muscle again prior to quarantine through my PT and whatnot. I hadn't really had a chance to get back into Orangetheory, but the idea of how they do their workouts I liked, even though they do use a treadmill and a rower which I don't have at my house. But you can still emulate that heart rate by doing exercises. It's just means like more burpees and squat jumps and whatnot. But it's nice because you can do that stuff at home with no equipment really. And that's the other thing with quarantine is, the minute it started, you couldn't get equipment anywhere online. So I was trying to just be creative, like I'll do hammer curls with a detergent bottle or single leg dead lifts with a soup can because you have those things in your house.

Shelby Stanger:

Then you started offering these classes online. Is that true?

Meagan Martin:

I started a YouTube channel and I put them on YouTube for people to do if they wanted to, just because I figured if I was trying to find something to do, other people wanted that as well. So I thought I would just share. And I thought it was a great way to hold myself accountable to doing the workouts.

Shelby Stanger:

Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. I'm going to ask you a more difficult question, but I want to talk about this because it's important. You're a black female in this sport of rock climbing, which is a really white dude sport. And I think it's changing, but I'm really curious. I know you're doing a lot yourself to change the sport. Talk to me about that and how you're hoping to bring climbing to not only more women, but to more people of color.

Meagan Martin:

For me, I happened upon climbing and I think that that's a similar story that a good percentage of the climbing community has. Obviously there's some people who have family members who were climbers or they live near the mountains. But for a lot of us, I think we probably just found ourselves in a gym because we grew up during the gym climbing age, luckily, and that's how we got into climbing. Because if I hadn't walked into this random gym in Florida, I would have never found it because neither of my parents are climbers. Before climbing, I was a gymnast, another sport that is predominantly white. So also yes, I am black. I'm also white. My mom is white, so I'm biracial, but do identify with both.

Meagan Martin:

And I never thought about it so much that I was in sports that were predominantly white. It didn't bother me per se to not see people like me. I guess just because I was so in love with what I was doing, which I think is okay. But I guess as I've gotten older, I did start to notice it a bit more or I noticed myself noticing growth even. Like with climbing, I climbed for four years as a kid and then I stopped for seven years. And when I came back to the sport, I was climbing professionally and coaching. And I just remember going to that first Youth Nationals and seeing how much climbing had grown since I was a youth kid. When I was a youth kid, I didn't see anyone who looked like me. And all of the sudden, I was seeing a few kids here and there, obviously still small numbers. But to me I was like, "Wow, that is so different from what I experienced, and it's great to see it."

Meagan Martin:

My goal has always been to make climbing more visible in general. And I think being on American Ninja Warrior, that was really helpful as a platform, since it's on national TV, to be able to talk about the fact that I am a rock climber. Because for most people, rock climbing is not something they know much about. Even my family. My aunts and uncles still don't necessarily a hundred percent understand what I do as a climber. For us to think the general public has any real idea, I think that in most cases they don't. With Ninja Warrior, I always felt like I had that opportunity to make it more visible.

Meagan Martin:

In the time that we're in now, I'm feeling more called to - not just make it visible by doing what I'm doing, but make it visible more so on purpose. I feel like a big challenge with the outdoor community is the fact that depending on where you live geographically or the family you were raised in or whether or not you have a car to drive out to the mountains, these are all things that can keep you from experiencing the outdoors at a younger age. I hope that we can find ways to make it more accessible to people.

Meagan Martin:

And I honestly have this idea that it'd be cool to make it part of curriculum in public schools. I think that that would be a great way. And that's something I've been thinking about lately. I don't necessarily have any plans on how to make that happen, but I think that starting early with people would make it more accessible and just more known to people so that they can have the chance to get out and try it, because you're not going to wake up one day and you're 40 generally and have never been on a hike and think, "Oh, I'm just going to go do a six mile hike by myself in the woods. I've never been in the woods, but that sounds like a great idea." If we can just introduce it to people earlier in more of a public way versus a private way, I think would be really helpful.

Shelby Stanger:

I think that's a great idea. I'm thinking about it. Access is really tricky in the outdoors. And even where I live in San Diego, there's kids that have never been to the beach. And it blows my mind. And I'm part of this organization called Outdoor Outreach that takes kids in less advantaged areas surfing, and rock climbing, and mountain biking. And it's not a requirement at schools, unfortunately. But if there was a program like that at every school, how awesome would that be!

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. And I think the private programs are great. And I think that that's a great start, but again, it's like, how do you get people into the programs. Why can't we just start at school where they have to go to school? Everyone has to go to school. If we start introducing it into the curriculum-

Shelby Stanger:

Everybody has to hike. Everybody has to rock climb. Everybody has to go surfing.

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. And maybe you don't like it. But at least you got to experience it.

Shelby Stanger:

As part of her efforts to make climbing more accessible and visible, Meagan's worked to raise awareness about childhood obesity and diabetes, and she also mentors kids on American Ninja Warrior Junior. In addition, she and her sponsor, So iLL, have collaborated with the organization 1Climb to bring climbing walls to more kids of diverse backgrounds through the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Shelby Stanger:

What is 1Climb? Because I know you have this organization you are a part of and you feel really passionate about. Can you talk to us about it?

Meagan Martin:

So iLL has worked a lot with 1Climb and I definitely believe in everything that they're doing. What they've been trying to do is build walls at boys and girls clubs so that the kids can learn how to climb at the Boys & Girls Club, because what does the Boys & Girls Club do? It brings kids in and they teach them lots of different sports and guide them in different ways to be successful in life. That's the whole mentorship program. It's cool to add climbing to that list of things that the kids have an opportunity to try. They've been doing great stuff with that. I think COVID obviously changes the timeline of some of the openings that they had planned, but they're getting donations to different Boys & Girls clubs all the time to build new walls so that they get companies' support in order to make those walls happen at the Boys & Girls club.

Shelby Stanger:

That's fantastic. We'll have to link to that program in the show notes so if people want to contribute, they can.

Meagan Martin:

Yeah, totally. That'd be awesome.

Shelby Stanger:

What do you want more people to know about your sport and what you do?

Meagan Martin:

Climbing has a lot of layers. There's lots of ways in which you can climb. Some people only climb outside. Some people are competition climbers. Then on top of that, you have multiple disciplines of climbing - there's bouldering, sport climbing, speed climbing, trad climbing, free soloing like Alex Honnold does. For example, free soloing is different than free climbing, but generally people don't know that. Free climbing just means you're not using gear to get up a climb. You use the gear for safety, but you're not ever tugging on it or using it just like back in the day, based on knowing you have no protection. And it's very dangerous.

Meagan Martin:

There's just a big difference between being a competition climber and an outdoor climber. It's a different skill set. Both are amazing. And a lot of athletes do both, but the way that our sport has evolved, it's harder to spend the same amount of time outside if you're going to be a competitive climber. It's a very difficult sport to be successful at in a competition realm because it's always changing. You prepare for possibilities. You do not prepare for something planned. For example, in gymnastics, you work forever on a routine. I guess it's probably similar in surfing. It's like you can surf all the time and catch all these waves, but you don't know what set you're going to get when you go out in the water in a competition. The same with climbing, we don't know what the route setters are going to set. We have all these things we do to prepare for movements and reading routes and whatnot but when you get out there it's something you've never seen before.

Meagan Martin:

I would just like for people to know that just because we're rock climbers, we don't all do one thing. There's very different approaches you can have to how you spend your time climbing.

Shelby Stanger:

I just learned a lot, Meagan. Thank you so much for sharing. And I really appreciate you using a surfing analogy because that is the language in which I see the world. How does one get into climbing? People here are motivated, they want to start...

Meagan Martin:

Prior to quarantine, I would have said the easiest way is to go to your local gym and check it out. But right now with gyms, it's kind of uncertain. Some gyms are open, but some of them have limited opening. So maybe only members are allowed right now. And we don't really know the future of gyms. Back in the day, people would generally start outside. And that's something that if you have access to rocks you could do. I would suggest if you're going to go out climbing outside and that's your first experience, go with somebody who is a climber, do not go alone. Don't go and try to wing it. Definitely look up maybe guiding services. Or if you have a close friend that knows what they're doing and you trust them, I think that's fine too.

Meagan Martin:

But once gyms do open, I think gyms are the safest and best place to start because there's lots of instruction and it's a controlled environment. Climbing outside has more risk involved because even though a cliff has been there for a long time or a boulder, rocks break, things happen. You always have to remember that you're in nature. The same... Again, with surfing, it's like you don't turn your back on the ocean. It's a force. It's something that you have to respect and make sure you're taking all the right precautions when you are outside.

Shelby Stanger:

What color of nail polish are you currently rocking?

Meagan Martin:

Oh, it's like... Oh, this is a tricky color. It's a pastel color. I'm very into the pastels right now. But it's almost like a lilac-y but with some more pink in there. I really don't know what the color is. But I think the name of that color was dovetail. What does that even mean? I don't know.

Shelby Stanger:

What's your favorite piece of climbing gear?

Meagan Martin:

My shoes.

Shelby Stanger:

Are you rocking the Jason Momoa pink ones?

Meagan Martin:

I am not. But those are awesome. I'm really into... they have this shoe called The New Zero. And it's gray, actually. But that's my favorite shoe. I wear it all the time.

Shelby Stanger:

What's your favorite snack to take with you rock climbing?

Meagan Martin:

String cheese.

Shelby Stanger:

Ew. But that's awesome for you. It was my favorite snack as a kid, but...

Meagan Martin:

I still love string cheese. I think they're so good.

Shelby Stanger:

Hilarious. Any nutrition tips, actually? You're pretty fit.

Meagan Martin:

I generally try to just eat very balanced. I have a huge sweet tooth. I also like wine. I try to make sure I have proteins, good fats, veggies in all my meals. And I also just really try to listen to my body because when you're full but you're thinking, "Oh, I'll just eat one more bite," I just stop once I'm full. I have found that that really helps.

Shelby Stanger:

That is so hard.

Meagan Martin:

It's so hard. It's really hard. But once you start doing it, I feel like it gets easier and you'll just feel better.

Shelby Stanger:

Any books you recommend that you've read that you'd love that you go back to?

Meagan Martin:

One of my all time favorite books was Pride and Prejudice. I loved that one so much. It's super classic though.

Shelby Stanger:

By Jane Austen. It's like something you had to read in high school or junior high school.

Meagan Martin:

I know. I even wrote a paper on it in high school. I absolutely loved it. I also... a really sad book, but there's a book that Carole Radziwill wrote called What Remains. It's like a memoir. It's really good, but really sad. If you're ready to cry...

Shelby Stanger:

Can't wait.

Meagan Martin:

Yeah. Sorry.

Shelby Stanger:

What's the weirdest task you've had to do during a Ninja Warrior challenge?

Meagan Martin:

Well, I could tell you the one that I really disliked. They used to have this obstacle called the rolling log where you would hold onto it and it would like roll down and you'd be flipping over and over and over. And it makes you so dizzy and you never know where you are. And then next thing you know you're on the pad, hopefully. Some people end up in the water and... Ugh, I hated that obstacle so much. I would be really happy if I never have to do it again.

Shelby Stanger:

What's your favorite obstacle?

Meagan Martin:

Generally, anything that involves jumping. There's this one called The Hourglass Drop where you jump from a trampoline to this plank that moves. And then you have to shimmy down the plank and drop down onto a trampoline back up. That one was really fun.

Shelby Stanger:

That sounds really fun. We ask all of our guests this one question. Any advice to people who just want to live a little more wildly. Maybe they feel stuck. Maybe they've got a dream that seems daunting. What can they do?

Meagan Martin:

I think the best thing to do is to go for it. Maybe give yourself a timeline if you're worried about that kind of thing, but you really just seem to go for it and stay positive and surround yourself with people who are going to support you and support what you're doing, because the more positivity you have around you, I think the more successful you'll be.

Shelby Stanger:

There's a lot you can accomplish when you're surrounded by a network of supportive friends, family members, and fans. It's one of the reasons Meagan mentors kids and wants to give more of them the opportunity to try climbing. Your next wall idea might only seem possible when someone who cares about you gives you a boost.

Shelby Stanger:

Meagan, thank you for being a bad ass and thank you for sharing your message with us about improving access to rock climbing and other outdoor activities. It was great to have you on this show. You're a total superstar. I can't wait to hang in person one day. You can find links to Meagan's favorite books, her favorite shoes, and more by heading over to our show notes at [rei.com/wildideasworthliving](http://rei.com/wildideasworthliving). You can also follow Meagan on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at [meaganmartin89](https://www.instagram.com/meaganmartin89). Her website is [meaganmartinclimbing.com](http://meaganmartinclimbing.com). That's Meagan spelled M-E-A-G-A-N. You can also find her HIIT workout videos on YouTube at [meaganmagoo](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmeaganmagoo). That's Meagan M-E-A-G-A-N M-A-G-O-O.

Shelby Stanger:

Wild Ideas Worth Living is part of the REI Podcast Network. It's hosted by me, Shelby Stanger, written and edited by Annie Fassler and Sam Peers Nitzberg, and produced by Chelsea Davis. Our executive producers are Palo Mottola and Joe Crosby. And our presenting sponsor is Subaru. Join us the week after next. I'll talk to Joe Kudla about how he juggles running a men's athleisure company, Vuori, as well as being a husband and father and making time for staying fit.

Shelby Stanger:

As always, we appreciate it when you subscribe, rate, and review the show wherever you listen. And remember, some of the best adventures often happen when you follow your wildest ideas.