



Ep. 16: Sahara Rose (CAS'13), Entrepreneur, Author and Ayurveda Expert

Host: Corinne Tramuta (MET'17), BU Alumni Relations

Sahara Rose (CAS'13) explores her entrepreneurial journey from starting a health and wellness blog during her time at BU to becoming a best-selling author of the *Idiot's Guide to Ayurveda*. From there, Sahara has gone on to publish her second book, *Eat Feel Fresh*, and her brand now encompasses a massive social media following, a popular podcast called "Highest Self", and much more.

Podcast Transcript:

- Jeff Murphy: I'm Jeff Murphy from Boston University Alumni Relations, and I'm your host for an interview series showcasing the career paths of our most interesting and accomplished alumni. Welcome to the Proud to BU podcast. Today it's my pleasure to welcome our very first guest interviewer on Proud to BU, my colleague in the Alumni Relations office and fellow BU alum, Corinne Tramuta. Corinne, I know you've been closely following the career of our guest today, so I'm really glad you were willing to take the lead on this episode.
- Corinne Tramuta: Thanks so much for having me, Jeff. And yes, I'm thrilled to welcome today's guest, bestselling author, health coach, podcaster, and Ayurveda expert, Sahara Rose. Sahara graduated from BU's College of Arts and Sciences in 2013 with a degree in International Relations. In just five years since then, Sahara has authored two books and built a brand across her blog, podcast and social media platforms centered on healing the mind and body through Ayurveda, the world's oldest health system. She sat down with me to talk about how she transformed this personal passion of hers into entrepreneurial success.
- Corinne Tramuta: Sahara. Thank you so much for being here today and chatting with me. I'm a total fan. I've been listening to your podcast for about a year. You're based in southern California, right? In San Diego?
- Sahara Rose: In Los Angeles.
- Corinne Tramuta: Los Angeles. How long has it been since you've been back to Boston or back to campus?
- Sahara Rose: Yeah, so I grew up actually in the Boston area. I grew up in Newton, and I went to Newton South High School and when I graduated I was like, I don't want to live in Boston. Like I grew up here, I want to have space from my family. So I actually went to school in DC for the first year and a half. And I was really interested in international human rights, especially for children advocacy. So I thought DC is a good place for that. But then, my first year it was just getting used to college. Like you don't really have anything to compare it to. But then the second year, the first half of my sophomore year, I was just realizing it wasn't the right place for me. It was a smaller school. It was very cliquey. Everyone kind of knew each other, would gossip about each other. And I was friends with a lot of the international community and it was just a lot of people who would like go to Europe for the weekend. And I don't know, I just didn't really feel like this was the college experience that I wanted. But at

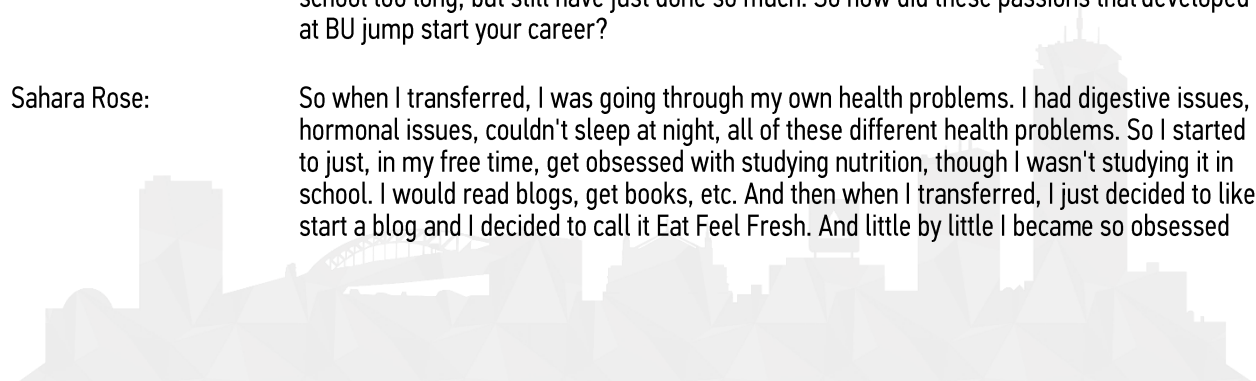
the same time I didn't really know what other options. So my cousin had gone to BU for the English language program earlier and she was living in Boston. And then she ended up going to Northeastern and she said, "Well, why don't you come to Boston for a semester and just spend a semester with me and near your family and just try it out." And there's a very, very big international community in Boston, even bigger than in DC actually, especially with students. So I decided would do a visiting semester at BU the second half of my sophomore year, and I loved it so much that I never went back. And then I graduated from BU.

Corinne Tramuta: So you know, you speak about how much you loved it here. Can you tell us a little bit about what your experience was like? You know, where did you live, what were your favorites spots, you know, things just explain your life a little bit when you were here.

Sahara Rose: Yeah, so it was different for me because I transferred in the middle of the year. So I didn't really know anyone. Like I knew people who went to other schools in Boston, Northeastern, Suffolk. And I lived off campus, I lived in like Downtown Crossing area right next to the Boston Commons. So I would just take the T, like it went straight to into BU campus so I didn't have to switch or anything. So at first I was like kind of feeling like a commuter, like, oh, I'm just coming in for class and leaving. But then with the classes there, I started to just make friends in the class. I particularly loved all of the Women's Studies classes that I took. Like I took one called Women, Race and Gender in Mass Media with Dr. Gottfried and that was amazing. I loved it so, so, so much. And there was another one on Globalization and Women and it was just so fascinating because it was topics that I wanted to just talk about and learn about in my free time. Whereas when I was studying more of the human rights and law, it was a lot more just like memorization of things. So I really liked how the emphasis was just on you understanding topics. Like I remember in the middle of my junior year, I had to go to India in the middle of the year and she's like, "Okay, you can go to India for the week, but when you come back you have to do a presentation on what you saw in India." And I did that and I was like, that's so cool. So I love how BU allowed so much freedom. Like that is really what I would say BU, is it's freedom. It's perfect for someone who's an individual. If you're someone who's like, I just want to like try everything, explore, like really make the city my campus, then that is right for you. And I just noticed that at BU, since it's such a big school and the campus is like wide open, there isn't cliqueiness whereas in other schools with a small campus you're just seeing the same people in the same places. You don't really have anywhere else to go. So that can happen. And I spent a lot of time like just throughout the city, like I would go to class and then go to like Sweat and Soul Yoga, which was like kind of the Allston part of BU. Take the T down there, and then like get a salad from across the street, and then take the T back home. Like I really felt like an independent adult there.

Corinne Tramuta: You have just created so much imagery in my head. I love it. You should come work in our marketing communications office. The word you used, freedom, to sort of describe like the BU experience. I love that word so much. So, you know, you're talking about the passions you sort of developed from the classes that you took here, right? Like Women's Studies, sort of developing a global view. How did these passions sort of jump start your career once you graduated, because I know that you're a 2013 graduate, so you haven't been out of school too long, but still have just done so much. So how did these passions that developed at BU jump start your career?

Sahara Rose: So when I transferred, I was going through my own health problems. I had digestive issues, hormonal issues, couldn't sleep at night, all of these different health problems. So I started to just, in my free time, get obsessed with studying nutrition, though I wasn't studying it in school. I would read blogs, get books, etc. And then when I transferred, I just decided to like start a blog and I decided to call it Eat Feel Fresh. And little by little I became so obsessed



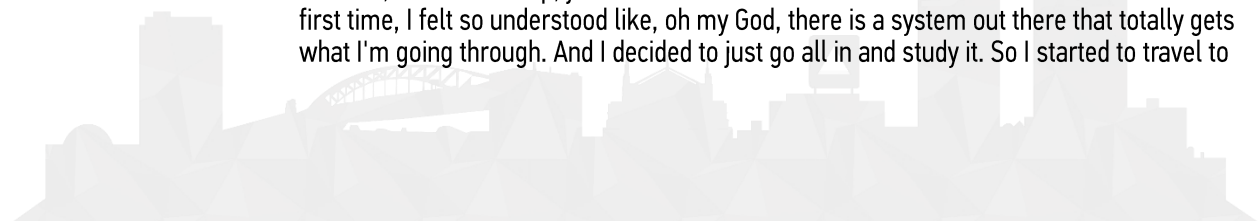
with the blog, to be honest. During some economics classes, I was blogging. I will admit it, I was obsessed with my blog. And what BU allowed me to do was, obviously there's a lot of work involved, but I still was able to keep up with my blogging. And then from blogging I wanted to study holistic health coaching. So I did a holistic health coaching school while I was in college. And then I wanted to learn about sports nutrition so I did a sports nutrition certification while I was in college. I started my health coaching business when I was like, yeah, the end of my junior year. So then when I was a senior I had like my blog and my health coaching business, and then the things that I was learning in school, I was just kind of more applying the psychology of it to health coaching. Like just the different types of, for example, like in Women in the Media, how are they portrayed in the media? What does that have to do with eating disorders? How do eating disorders fuel a lot of our health problems? So I was just taking kind of the best of everything and making it my own. And then when I graduated, I had tried an internship at some ad agency. I think that was right after I graduated and I couldn't do it. And I was like, okay, I really want to make this blog like my main thing and my health coaching practice. So I just went all in, and here I am three books later, still doing it.

Corinne Tramuta:

So I want to transition now into sort of the basis of what you and your business is all about, and that being Ayurveda, the world's oldest study and system of medicine. And I'm going to leave that to you, to sort of tell us what that's about and how that shaped your business. Even going off of what you were talking about before, with your health coaching business and all the health problems you were experiencing, how did you discover Ayurveda? And just tell us more about what that is.

Sahara Rose:

So when I was going through those health problems, I went to tons of different doctors and no one could really find the issue. So I knew that there had to be a reason why I have digestive issues, I'm not getting my period, I'm fainting and I lost 30 pounds and I have anxiety and insomnia and like all of these things. But everyone was like, "take birth control, take anti-anxiety medication, take IBS medication," just prescribing me different pills. So eventually I had been volunteering in India, not related to studying Ayurveda, I was just volunteering there. I've always just loved India. And I decided while I was there that I would visit an Ayurvedic doctor just to see what they would say. And the moment that she saw me, she said, bete, which means daughter, she's like, Oh, you're too pretty to never have a baby. And she knew that I was infertile at the time, my body had gone to perimenopause, I was at risk of osteoporosis and Alzheimer's, because I wasn't getting any nutrients in my system because of how bad my digestion had gotten. So I wanted to obviously heal myself, but at the same time, a lot of her practices and the Ayurveda practices are really old school. A lot of animal products like ghee and milk and cheese, a lot of rice and lentils. It's pretty much just Indian food for the rest of your life and lots of spices and herbs that don't exist in the US. So I'm like, okay, well I'm definitely not going to be able to follow this forever, but I really love the wisdom of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is the world's oldest health system. It originated in ancient India over 5,000 years ago and it's the health system that all others are based off of, herbology, Western medicine, Chinese medicine. So it's very, very holistic and it looks at the bio-individual; it looks at your mind, it looks at your body, looks at your personality, and it creates essentially an archetype for you. And that archetype is called a Dosh, an energy type. So we all have our specific array of these three Doshas, these three energy types in varying amounts. So what I was experiencing is called a Vata imbalance, an air imbalance. I had too much air in my body, which is bloating, gas, constipation, dry skin, dry hair, feeling cold all the time, your period literally drying up and eventually stopping, hair falling, And then air in my mind, which is anxiety, unable to settle on one thing, feeling restless, unable to sleep, just invariable. So the moment that I found out about that for the first time, I felt so understood like, oh my God, there is a system out there that totally gets what I'm going through. And I decided to just go all in and study it. So I started to travel to



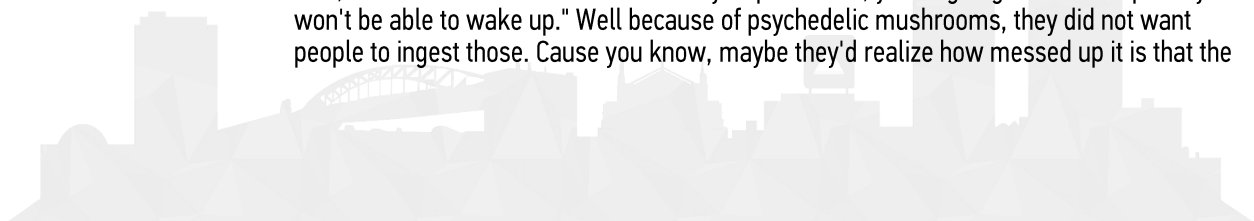
India while I was in BU still. And then when I graduated, I moved to India and I studied Ayurveda full time and that's when I started to write my first book called Eat Right for Your Mind-Body Type, which was infusing Ayurveda with western modern nutritional science. And then from there I got hired by Penguin Random House to write the Official Idiot's Guide to Ayurveda, which went on to become the bestselling Ayurveda book ever. And then now my new book, Eat Feel Fresh is really my approach to Ayurveda, the modern approach taking it and making it more alkaline, making it work for different types of foods, so it's not just Indian food. And that book has done amazingly, it came out like a month and something ago and it's done so, so well because people really want to know about Ayurveda but they've also shied away from it because it's been confusing. Or the ingredients have been you know, really just only Indian food and they want to see, how can I have Mexican food and Thai food and Vietnamese food and still eat healthy and still eat right for my mind-body type. So that's what I do. And I have a podcast called Highest Self podcast where we had discussed what makes you your highest self. So I interview people like Deepak Chopra and Kino Yoga and some of the biggest people as well as just regular people and talk to them about what makes them their highest selves. And then also share my own solo casts on just inspiration and getting things done and relationships and purpose and all of these topics that we think about, but maybe there hasn't really been like a young voice that you can relate to and understand that's talking to it. It's sort of been more of like that old school spiritual teacher. So trying to make all of these things just more accessible for people. I have online programs, I help people create online businesses. I help people become more abundant. I help people turn their story into their brand and monetize it. Really everything that I've learned how to do on my own, I help people do.

Corinne Tramuta:

I want to talk about your book, your most recent book, Eat Feel Fresh that you mentioned. It truly is a work of art. I mean, it's not just a cookbook, right? It's a lookbook with stunning photos of India, of you and these beautiful colors, and I want you to tell us sort of the process of writing that, and finding a publisher and having that sort of build your brand. I really just feel like you said, the success that you've had over the last even months since it came out has just been incredible. So tell us a little bit about that.

Sahara Rose:

Yeah, I mean really, I started to write that book when I was going through my health problems seven years ago because I was just looking for things I could eat that would not make my stomach in horrible pain. And then I would just start to cook in the kitchen. Like, okay, I'm going to try to make quinoa bread, I'm going to try to make naan without wheat in it. I'm going to try this, I'm going to try that. And then over time it just led to me really falling in love with cooking, which is something that I was never interested in at all before. And I think every healer, the reason why they're in it is because they needed the healing themselves. So, once I started to cook, then I started to read blogs about it, make my own recipes, and eventually I went to culinary school for it here in Los Angeles. And I really from that day one wanted to create a modern Ayurvedic cookbook. So once Idiot's Guide came out, actually it was even before it came out, I was like, okay, I need to write this book because Idiot's Guide to Ayurveda is like the best book if you just want to learn everything is to know about Ayurveda. There are things in Ayurveda that don't make sense for today's time, like in Ayurveda, they say no one should ever eat raw food. Well, that makes sense in India, because you'll get sick if you eat raw food. Even today, because of the parasites and bacteria in the soil. Or in Ayurveda they say, no one eat mushrooms. I was like, how does that make sense? Because in northern India, mushrooms are a huge part of their diet. So I really did a lot of research on that. And the reason why is because psychedelic mushrooms were growing in India. So when the British rule was seizing over India for a century, they said, "don't eat mushrooms because they're poisonous, you're going to fall asleep and you won't be able to wake up." Well because of psychedelic mushrooms, they did not want people to ingest those. Cause you know, maybe they'd realize how messed up it is that the



British government is running their country. And then at the same time there are poisonous mushrooms. If you just pick a mushroom you see growing on the street, like that is poisonous. So they just want to keep people safe. They said no one eat mushrooms, but there are medicinal mushrooms, Reishi and all these other ones. So I look at Ayurveda from today's lens. I say, what makes sense for today and what doesn't? And then I created recipes based off of that.

Corinne Tramuta: Love that. So you mentioned Penguin Random House is the publisher, right? Or was that just for Idiot's Guide, or for both of them?

Sahara Rose: For both of them.

Corinne Tramuta: Did they reach out to you or did you sort of find them? How did you get connected to them?

Sahara Rose: Yeah, so my first book that I wrote, *Eat Right for Your Mind-body Type*, after I wrote it, I didn't know anything about a publishing process. I've never met an author in my life. I was like, I'm just gonna write a book and I wrote one. It took me like two years to write that book. I spent all my money on getting it edited and graphic design and this and that. And then once it was done, I was like, I really wish this book could be like on the shelves of Barnes and Nobles, but I don't know how to go about that. So then I started to just research and I learned you need a literary agent, and then the literary agent is the person that talks to the publisher. So I emailed like a hundred literary agents, and none of them responded to me clearly. And then eventually I met a girl who is an author. And then I met another girl who is an author, and just from knowing them, I showed them the book, I was like, look, I have this completed book that I wrote and I'm looking for a publisher. So one of them was like, "Okay, I don't know if my literary agent will be interested or not, but I'll connect you with her." And she did. And she was like, "Oh, I really love it. Let's try shopping publishers." So shopping publishers is when they show, it's normally a book proposal, not a whole book, but you know, I really went all out and we sent it to 30 different publishers and they all said no. So I was like, uh, okay. I guess this might have to be self-published but I was really holding that vision of, I want this to be on shelves of Barnes and Nobles. This is a good book and this is going to change people's lives, and there's so many other people out there with health problems, anxiety, and all these issues just like me who could really benefit from this book. And two days after I got all of the no's, she got called, the agent got called by Penguin Random House and they were looking for someone to write the *Official Idiot's Guide to Ayurveda*. And they were like, "Do you know anyone?" She's like, "Well, I know this girl, she's young, but she may be a good fit." And they're like, "Huh, I don't really know. Like, okay, let's just see what her table of contents would be." So they gave me a week to write a sample table of contents and I just channeled source and that day I wrote the full 16-page table of contents, like the best one ever. And I sent it back to them. They're like, "okay, if you were to write the first chapter, let's see it." So I went to Barnes and Nobles, I read like 30 *Idiot's Guide* books, really understood their tone, stayed up all night, wrote that first chapter and then sent it back to them. And then they're like, "Okay. We had an author who is four months into the six months that you get to write these books and she quit. So would you be able to start to finish, write this book in two months?" I'm like, yes. So I did. I just, I really zoomed in and I cranked it out and I wrote the 400-page textbook on Ayurveda in two months. And then once I came out, you'd think that I'd be like super happy, but I was like, oh no. Like I want to make my Ayurveda book happen, like my modern version of Ayurveda. And now I just wrote this book for them and it's not my book. And even during the writing process, it was really hard cause I didn't want to take the same information that I had put in that book because there's all these copyright laws and you can't repeat yourself. And I'm like, how am I gonna re-explain Ayurveda in a way I have not previously explained it before? But then I realized, look, if I were to die next year, this is the last book that everyone's,

anyone's ever going to know from me. I need to make it the best ever and put my all into it. So I did. And I'm really glad that I did because I still modernized it in that book. I took out all animal products, there's no ghee, and still really made it work for today's time. And then after I wrote that book, then I had a relationship with the publisher that I could write my next book.

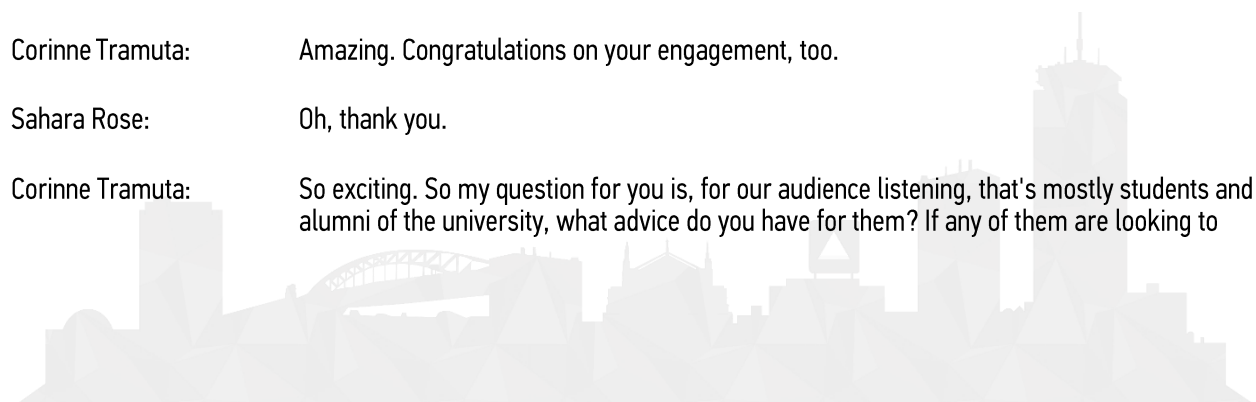
Corinne Tramuta: You know, you truly are an entrepreneur. I love your grit. You hold these visions, you stick to them and you believe in yourself, right? Like that's truly what it takes to be an entrepreneur when you're your own boss. Nobody's going to give you a pat on the back or tell you to believe in yourself. That really has to come from you. And you know, you started out with your blog. You have your podcast, you have three books, your social media is incredible. All these masterclasses in many courses that you're sending out to your community via email. I mean, you're really doing it all here. So this is sort of your brand, right? It's very digital and you're interacting with so many different people. So what is next for you? What do you see being next for yourself? Like what can we expect to see from Sahara Rose in the next few years?

Sahara Rose: Yeah, good question. I was just asking myself that. I'm like, what's 2019 going to look like? I've done a lot and I've had really that fire under my a** to get all this stuff done and I'm really grateful for it. But what I'm seeking is more space because to write a book you really have to be all in. And right now I'm managing a business, I have multiple people who work for me, and it's a real business. But what I'm seeking is to write my next book, which is going to be on entrepreneurship, actually, and looking at the Doshas, these archetypes, in the frame of entrepreneurship and helping people, especially who want to do online businesses because it's something that is so life changing. I mean, once you do an online business, you're like, why would anyone do any other kind of business? But it does take this kind of learning curve that a lot of people get really daunted by it, an email list and your social media, and it is a lot of moving parts. So I want to create this space for myself, and I'm also getting married in June, for the beginning part of 2019, to just focus on writing that book. In my experience, when you're writing a book, that needs to be pretty much all you're doing, you need to be all in. Writing a book, you're not gonna be able to crunch in like two hours in between meetings and like, maybe editing it, yes. But writing it, you need to be such a creative channel, and just the littlest things, like a text from someone, can really throw you off. So like when I'm writing a book I'm like, "Hey guys, you're not going to hear from me in the next two months." And it really doesn't take more than two months to write a book, guys. Just that two months that you're like really setting those boundaries, it could be during the holidays, etc. I mean, it could even be less. Like I have a friend, she wrote her book, it's a great book, in two weeks. It's not the time that it takes, like the Eat Right for Your Mind-Body Type, I spent two years cause I didn't know how to write a book. If you just crunch and you have a table of contents and you have a plan and you have a strategy and you just go after that, then you can get a book done like literally even over a weekend. I've heard of people like Deepak Chopra wrote Seven Laws of Spiritual Success in a weekend. So it's just one channel that has to just come through and you just have to like totally allow it and not to schedule it into the slots of your day. So I want space, I want to write the book, I want to get married and yeah, and just see where the energy flows at that point.

Corinne Tramuta: Amazing. Congratulations on your engagement, too.

Sahara Rose: Oh, thank you.

Corinne Tramuta: So exciting. So my question for you is, for our audience listening, that's mostly students and alumni of the university, what advice do you have for them? If any of them are looking to



become entrepreneurs? What lessons have you learned and how can you channel that into some advice?

Sahara Rose: Yeah, I mean, I'm writing a whole book on it, so there's a lot of lessons. Really it's to know what type of entrepreneur that you are. There's many different types. There are the more Vata types, who are the more creative types, there's more Pitta types, who are the more like analytical, execution types, there's the Kapha types that are more personal, one on one type. So first have self awareness. Don't just follow someone's business model because you see they're doing well at it. That may not be what serves you the best. So first it takes awareness of where are my skills, where do I best serve? Like, yes, I can wear these different hats, but is that really the best use of my unique gifts? And then from there just focus on one thing. Don't try to do it all. Try to just do one thing and break it down. Reverse engineer it. What is the next step I could take? Okay, once I do that and maybe it's sending an email, maybe it's connecting with someone. Maybe it's this, maybe it's that. Break it down step by step, and don't get overwhelmed by the enormity of the task, because that's only going to hold you back.

Corinne Tramuta: Amazing. I love it. Sahara, thank you so much for all that you shared. We're so proud of you. We can't wait to see what you do next. It has really been a pleasure chatting with you today.

Sahara Rose: Oh, thank you so much for having me.

Corinne Tramuta: Thanks again, Sahara, for joining me on the Proud to BU podcast. If you'd like to learn more about Sahara, you can visit her website, iamsaharaose.com, or you can subscribe to the Highest Self podcast.

Jeff Murphy: Nice job, Corinne. Thanks again for taking the reins on this one. We both want to thank all of you for listening to the Proud to BU podcast. If you like what we're doing, please be sure to subscribe, rate, and review Proud to BU wherever you download your episodes. I'm Jeff Murphy, and no matter where your path takes you, be Proud to BU. The Proud to BU podcast is produced by Boston University Alumni Relations. Our theme is from Jump and APM music. To learn more about Proud to BU, visit bu.edu/alumni/podcast.

