

5/11/21 10 Years of Fatshion for Men and Masc Folx with Bruce Sturgell

15:07:02 Good afternoon, good evening, good morning wherever you are in the world. I'm Tigress Osborne. I'm the Chair of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, otherwise known as NAAFA. Welcome to Fat Liberation Month May 2021, and welcome to the NAAFA

15:07:19 webinar series. We are very excited today to have Bruce Sturgell from Chubstr with us today to talk about men and masculine fashion. Before I introduce you to Bruce I just have a couple of announcements.

15:07:31 First of all, we want to thank our fantastic ASL interpreters from pro bono ASL, who are here with us live and will be featured if you're watching this recording later on

15:07:42 zoom. Later on YouTube.

15:07:43 Today we have Jonathan and Artye doing your SL interpretation. And we also have captions available by otter AI.

15:07:53 This is one of many webinars that we are hosting during Fat Liberation Month. The ones that are coming up next on Thursday at noon Pacific, artists Toni Tails. On Saturday at 2pm Pacific, photographer Spencer Pablo of the However Chubby project.

15:08:13 And on Monday, May 18 at 4pm Pacific, longtime activist Marilyn Wann.

15:08:20 Also this month you'll see the Reverend Dr. E-k Daufin, Marcy Cruz, Catherine Hack, Aarti Olivia Dubey, and the Fat Legal Advocacy, Rights, And Education Project.

15:08:30 We also have some fun activities happening, some self care some, some trivia and some partying at the end of the month. You can see details about all of those events by visiting our website, naafa.org, naafa.org, and clicking on the Fat Liberation Month tab.

15:08:47 We are able to bring you programming like this because of the generous support of our members and other contributors, and we bring you these programs free of charge because of their generosity.

15:08:59 If you would like to join that generosity campaign, just visit naafa.org and click on the contribute button. With no further ado, I want to introduce you to our special guest today.

15:09:12 Frustrated by lack of choices and representation, Bruce Sturgell created Chubstr.com to chronicle his awesome men's plus size looks, and where to find them.

15:09:24 In doing so, he became a voice for others who were struggling to see men with bodies reflective of their own, creating a map of accessible fashion for all. Today Chubstr highlights

15:09:37 other stylish plus size men and continues to shine a light on brands creating stylish accessible clothing for bigger bodies with masculine taste.

15:09:48 Ladies and gentlemen, and friends of all gens, please welcome Bruce, Bruce Sturgell to the NAAFA webinar series. Hi Bruce. Hello. Hello. Thank you for having me.

15:09:59 Thank you for joining us. So it's a great time, because you've just celebrated a 10 year anniversary. Yes, yes so Chubstr launched in March of 2011, so March 15 of 2011.

15:10:13 I can't believe it's been 10 years, it's crazy to think that that much time has gone by, but it's great. It's, it's quite a milestone and we're kind of celebrating it all throughout the year.

15:10:26 So, congratulations. And, and before we talk about what Chubstr is up to now let's go back. So in your bio, you talked a little bit about what inspired you.

15:10:36 But let's flush out that story a little bit more. Who was Bruce before

Chubstr?

15:10:42 You know, I was, way before I started Chubstr, I've always been a bigger guy I was a chubby teenager. I had really focused on my career at the time. I felt like I needed to have this real specific career and that was my only focus and so I stopped thinking

15:11:01 about the clothes that I wore. I had basically one or two things that I would just stick with, and I focused on work, and did that most of the time through my 20s.

15:11:13 I got to, got to the end of my 20s and realized that there was more to life than work and realized that I wasn't very happy with myself. I wasn't happy with the clothes that I was wearing because they weren't really, you know, your clothes are such an expression

15:11:31 of yourself. They're a part of your personality. They tell people who you are in a lot of ways when you can find things that you feel good in, that fit you.

15:11:41 And I didn't have those things and I was wearing ill fitting clothing and I was not happy with myself at the time. And I took a business trip to Washington DC, and I was in front of the White House, you know the fence there at the White House

15:12:07 where I was able to get up and have somebody take a picture of me. And when I got the picture back and saw it, I was just, I was really kind of just devastated. I just looked uncomfortable. I looked unhappy, like you, it was like that fake smile. Smile for the

15:12:14 camera.

15:12:16 You know, just not, it just wasn't good. It wasn't good and I started thinking about why that was and what made me feel that way. And I realized that I needed to make some changes and one of those changes was really trying to find clothes that I felt good

15:12:34 in, that made me feel good about myself because when I was younger, that was something that I really liked. It was something that I, a way that I expressed myself was through the things that I wore.

15:12:47 And so, I lived in the Midwest, in a small town in the Midwest at the time. And you can go to the mall.

15:12:54 And I was right at that line where most of the time, I wasn't going to find anything. I'd go into a shop and the person working there would see me and it'd just be this like, Oh no, here we go, that kind of thing.

15:13:07 And so it was always a really bad experience not only did I leave empty handed, but I felt like I was overlooked by the, the person who worked there or like I wasn't really afforded the dignity that you would expect, so

15:13:29 So, I don't know if this happens to men in the same way because I know a lot of mainstream men stores don't have as much in terms of access, accessories, but what happens a lot of times if you go to stores that are directed at women and fems, is they just start asking you like if you're

15:13:43 looking for earrings or if you're there to buy a gift card for someone or that kind of thing. Did you have that experience? Always! The, are you looking for something for a friend, are you looking for something for someone else, always.

15:13:55 And I'd be like, No, I just wanted to see what was here, you know in my size, and I got to where I kind of had a thing I would go in and say I'm looking for something for myself. I realize you probably don't have anything but I wanted to take a look.

15:14:05 So then I go back into the far corner where they kept all the extended

size products. And I wouldn't find anything, or I'd get something and it wouldn't fit.

15:14:14 And that happened over and over and over and I got frustrated. And so I left and I would go to the big and tall stores and the big and tall stores were selling clothes that would fit, but they were made for someone who's my dad's age. So I wasn't seeing

15:14:32 myself reflected in that it was a lot of like tall ex football players. I'm short and fat and so I wasn't seeing things that were made for me. And it was, it was frustrating so I left after this happened over and over, and I got frustrated and decided to start a blog on Tumblr to complain about not being able to find things. Let me interrupt you there to ask a question. When you talk about seeing that picture and feeling kind of demoralized about it and going on these shopping experiences

15:14:57 and feeling, you know really bummed out, what a lot of people's response to that would be in this culture that we live in.

15:15:11 I need to lose weight. So what was it about you that made your response, not I have to change my body but I have to change the way I gain access to fashion?

15:15:23 You know, I think there were a couple different things, I think, first and foremost, you know, I was really raised, I guess in a family that was like, that that felt like, we should all be what, we should all have options.

15:15:38 Everybody should have, your size shouldn't dictate what options you have, the opportunities that you have, the clothes that you get to wear, those kinds of things. And, you know, those were always the kind of things that, that we push back against. and so there's

15:15:53 a streak within me that was angry about that and wanted to push back against it. But then I also came from a business background and realized that there's real opportunity here that's just, these companies aren't taking advantage of. And I felt like there

15:16:12 was something to talk about here around, you know, accessibility and commerce and being a bigger person and the things that we get and the things that we don't get. And it just felt like something that there needed to be a discussion had around it and and

15:16:29 and that was kind of where it came from.

15:16:35 You know it. I don't know it really wasn't something that, I didn't set out with a real plan. I was just I was frustrated, I was honestly frustrated and I just wanted to have an outlet for that and luckily, we have the internet, which allows everybody

15:16:48 to complain about everything all the time. So I had a way to do that and I started this blog on Tumblr, that was called Big Boy Fashion. I mean it wasn't even, Chubstr didn't come until about six months later, and Big Boy Fashion was really, I mean it

15:17:02 was a last minute thing, spur the moment. I just kind of, All right, I'm going to create a blog I created it. I started putting up pictures of a few like outfits that I had that I really liked.

15:17:12 I started sharing resources, talking about places that you could shop and you could find extended size clothing. I started calling out brands that weren't carrying extended sizes, or that were making it difficult for you to find the stuff, whether in store

15:17:28 or online, because at that time there were a lot of shops that would carry, you know, three x four x, whatever, and they hid them. You couldn't search,

you couldn't use their search bar to select those sizes.

15:17:42 So you had to go in manually and try to find this stuff. All of that was frustrating. It just kept being more and more of an issue. Not to mention that there was no size, no size selection. There was not, you know, if you, if you're five x, and up.

15:17:59 I mean, it's still hard but then it was just like, impossible. So, there were all these things that I wanted to complain about. And I wanted to call out, and I wanted to make sure that people knew that, you know, they weren't the only ones who were thinking

15:18:14 about this stuff and so I started talking about those things. And I was sharing my looks, and giving the resources and people started to respond to that, they started to share the photos and the resources, and they started asking questions and they wanted

15:18:31 advice, you know. What should I wear for a job interview? Where can I find something that I can wear to a wedding? What do you think about these things together? You know and I realized that, as opposed to me, just continuing to kind of channel my frustration,

15:18:45 there was probably something more important here that can be created. And it was something that I looked back recently and I found old emails from like 2006, 2007 with me talking about this idea of this thing.

15:19:01 And it was Chubstr but it wasn't there yet, you know. And so it all came together then. And it became Chubstr, and it launched in March of 2011 and the mission was really to help people looking for masculine clothing

15:19:19 find, create and share their style, and that was it.

15:19:25 How did you pick the name Chubstr, where does that come from? So, that coming up with a name, it's hard. It's so hard and I've never been, I've never been good at it. And so it took weeks and weeks of whittling down names, and I had this list, and I had

15:19:40 a good friend with me, and we were we, we had met on like a Friday night and had some drinks and I go through the list with him, and he doesn't like any of them.

15:19:51 He's like, none of these, none of these are good, none of these are good. What about?

15:19:56 Are you willing to tell us some of the other things that were on the list. Honestly, I don't even remember. I mean, I'm sure there was like, you know,

15:20:05 Big Guy, you know, Big Guy Looks or I mean, ridiculous stuff that just wasn't going to work. Or, you know, I don't even remember at this point.

15:20:15 But we were sitting there and he's like, well you know there's like Tumblr and there's Flickr. What about Chubstr?

15:20:23 And I was like, perfect. And so that's how it came. I would like to take credit for that but I can't. He came up with it and it just made sense and we just kind of ran with it.

15:20:34 So, Yeah.

15:20:36 So you launched the website. And did you keep maintaining the Tumblr? it sounds like you had kind of a community on Tumblr. Yeah, so the, so the the Tumblr is still there, and I ended up eventually changing the name from Big Boy Fashion to Chubstr.

15:20:53 And, you know, it remains and it still gets updated and everything and there's still a community there that that interacts and engages. You know Tumblr has changed so much over the last decade that it's,

15:21:06 it is not quite as popular as it had been but there's still a lot of people that use it for for great things and, you know, we're still posting things there and we still share different things and do all of that. So yeah, you know I think just having a website,

15:21:22 having Chubstr.com, as a hub for everything just made a lot more sense. It was kind of a place where everything that I was writing could go, whether it was interviews or guides, or you know, photo shoots featuring either me or other bigger models.

15:21:42 There was a place for all of that stuff, and it was something that even if, you know, I don't know, Facebook makes a change and everything goes away then you've still got all of that.

15:21:54 And so, the Chubstr.com has always been the core of what this is about for me and it's the place to go for all that stuff and I mean there are thousands of articles there that cover everything. So you know it's been really interesting to look at how

15:22:05 that's evolved over the years from just being fashion and clothing, where to find things, to a lot of other things; lifestyle body image, I mean, activism. It runs the spectrum. There's a lot to cover for sure. Do you identify as an activist?

15:22:26 Um, yes, yes, I think there are, there are people that I look at who I feel like are phenomenal when it comes to activism, who really just, they're eloquent, they're powerful. They, when I look at them I think, man that that's awesome. I could never do that.

15:22:43 And, and that's really part of why Chubster has made it this long is because I think there is activism. I think, I think it's, you know, just existing as a fat person today is.

15:22:59 It's difficult, it's also kind of revolutionary. It's it's also something that really pushes back against these mainstream ideals of what the right "again right" kind of body is.

15:23:13 And, you know, that's, to me I look at Chubstr as kind of subversive activism. I think that, clothing, fashion, apparel is a really good on ramp to, I guess, positive body image, to fat activism, to self acceptance.

15:23:32 I mean, the clothes that you wear, it's so important. I mean, most of us are wearing something every day, you know, so it's, it's like having something that you feel good in that you want to wear that looks good that makes you feel good is so important.

15:23:44 And I think that is a place where people can look at a site like Chubstr and say, oh okay, well this is an option. I'm a, I'm a big and tall guy and he's talking about, you know, shirts for summer for big and tall guys and it's a good on ramp and then they

15:24:00 see that article and then they see, you know a fat surfer. We've got a photo of a fat surfer in a wave, you know, on his surfboard and it's phenomenal. And so these things that really pushed back against these ideas that we're always told that if you're

15:24:17 fat, you can't do things. You're, you're prohibited from doing certain things and I know that for years, it kept me from doing certain things and it was just that the idea that I was told that I can't do things because I'm a fat person. And it took me a

15:24:33 long time and you know a lot of work, and really creating a website to realize that that's not the case you know. So I do think, yes, you know, I'm an

activist, but I don't think that I am quite eloquent enough to just go out there and, and, you know,

15:24:52 hammer it like other people do. I guess my way of doing this is Chubstr. So yeah, well you know the visibility piece is tremendously important like we know that the internet has changed the way that the availability of seeing other fat bodies, especially

15:25:11 if you are in a place or in a family or in a community or whatever where you don't see a lot of other fat bodies. You can't just turn on the TV and see fat positive depictions of fat people.

15:25:24 Um, but you can find that on the internet that was part of what was important about Ch, about Tumblr and about MySpace. And then, you know, of course, Instagram, which is so such a visual medium.

15:25:36 One of my favorite hashtags on on Instagram is #fatvisibilityisactivism because that resonates with me so much. So you know what, what you do with just showcasing your looks and showcasing the other looks of men and masculine, folks, 15:25:52 I don't, I don't think we can belittle that. That's it. And, you know the piece you said about self expression and fashion is really important, but also having appropriate clothing creates economic accessibility and we know that fat people have been,

15:26:10 you know, shown in research to be seen by others as less professional or, you know less presentable at work. And so, I think, you know, if you have to,

15:26:20 if you have to do any of the fat activism things in the world or any of the fat self advocacy things in the world, and you can't dress appropriately, that's actually a huge social issue, right?

15:26:36 so.

15:26:34 So thank you for what you're doing, and, and were you one of the only people doing this in masculine fashion because we know that even as hard as it is to see images of fat women, fashion is the place where, relative to the rest of media,

15:26:54 we see more images of fat women.

15:26:56 But I hear from guys all the time like, that that there's just still very much not enough with the men. So when you got started where, who else was doing this?

15:27:06 There wasn't anybody doing this when I, when I started. I couldn't find anything and that was one of the reasons that I started doing this is because I just wasn't seeing anything out there that reflected me or I wasn't seeing any plus size men. You know,

15:27:21 the only thing that I can think of that I remember seeing when I was starting this, I saw some photos on Tumblr from something called Fantastic Man Magazine, and I don't even think it's around anymore.

15:27:42 I don't think at that time it was even around. I think it had closed by the time the photos have made it to Tumblr, and it was a couple models that were where they were in swimwear and it was like this black and white kind of shot, and it had like this

15:28:00 old look like a 1920s swimwear kind of look and I just loved the, I love the way they framed it. I love the way it looked. The guys weren't,

15:28:14 you know, I feel like it might have been a little bit of a stretch to say that they were fat.

15:28:19 But it was the only thing that was even in the realm that I had seen, that was close to that. And I knew that I wanted Chubstr to feature bigger people in

photography and, you know, either wearing the clothes that companies are trying to sell to us, or just enjoying

15:28:37 themselves, being happy, looking like they're having a great life because we don't see that. And even today, if you're in this community, you're seeing a lot of that, but if you're not, you're not seeing that.

15:28:51 So that's one of the things that I always have to keep in mind is that if you are one of the people who's on Instagram, and putting up photos of yourself and you're fat person, you know, it's easy to kind of fall into that where you're thinking like,

15:29:04 okay, I'm seeing a lot of this, I'm seeing more people, you know, more and more every day. And yes there are more and more every day, but there are people who are in small towns, all over the world that aren't seeing that every day. And they're not seeing

15:29:19 mainstream brands or publications regularly featuring people with bigger bodies. And there's so, we still have a long way to go, you know. So that's something that I always think about is that it's, there's a lot of work to be done, you know, as far as

15:29:40 the way that fat people are portrayed in media and pop culture,

15:29:47 the way that we are dealt with in the real world. You know, I, I was riding my bike.

15:29:55 I, for the last year or so since the pandemic has really hit us, I've been at home like everybody else and I've started riding my bike a lot. And I was, I was on mile 28, of a 30 mile bike ride.

15:30:16 And, you know, I'm pushing it like crazy and I'm riding down the street and these guys roll up next to me in their car and they got their window down and the guy looks over and he's like, sir sir.

15:30:27 Excuse me, sir.

15:30:29 You are too big to be riding that bike. You know, and I just looked at him. I'm like, I'm on mile 28 of a 30 mile bike ride so I think I'm doing all right. But it just goes to show that, you know, I don't get a lot of that personally, but it goes to show

15:30:44 that there's,

15:30:47 that is, that's like a light example of the things that the fat people have to deal with on a regular basis. There's still work to do, and that's really what it comes back to for me.

15:31:01 So you don't get a lot of that in real life, do you get a lot of it on the internet? What's the troll life of Chubstr like? What I will say is that the women's plus size blogs, they get it a lot more. Chubstr does get some of that.

There are trolls

15:31:15 there, there's pushback, there's that kind of thing but it is not anywhere near the scale or severity of what other people deal with. You know, anybody who's, who's, who's doing that, you know, with the, the women's plus side of things or fat fems, I mean it's

15:31:37 it's not, they are dealing with a lot worse than what I am having to deal with.

15:31:41 I don't get it all that, all that often. When it does pop up is anytime I do press. So anytime there's like, you know, an interview with a newspaper or, you know, the BBC or something like that.

15:31:55 There's a lot of negative attention, and there's a lot, there are a lot of trolls. They come out of the woodwork. You get that, so you kind of just learn to

expect that, you know, as it, as it happens. And for me,

15:32:08 I don't know, I, it's not something, I'm not losing sleep over it.

15:32:12 Those people are not the people that I'm trying to reach with Chubstr. I think, as much as there's that negative pushback, we get messages all the time from people who are like, I didn't know there was something like this. It makes a huge difference

15:32:28 for me. This is the kind of thing I need, especially when you get it from younger people because I'm 41 and had I been like 12, 13, 16, 20 and knowing that there was something like this out there,

15:32:43 it would have been a game changer for me. I mean, just to know that I wasn't alone, and that I was worth something at times that I didn't feel like I was, would have made a big difference.

15:32:54 So seeing those things that's really what's most important. And when it comes to trolls I mean, you get them, you know, for, for Chubstr, we just kind of handle it and bust them out.

15:33:07 Yeah, keep it moving.

15:33:10 Yeah. Do you have a typical Chubstr user?

15:33:14 So, when I started Chubstr,

15:33:18 I mean it was a selfish thing. I started it for me because I was frustrated. I wanted to find clothes. I wanted to talk about the issues and concerns and problems that I had but I realized very very quickly that there are lots and lots of other people from

15:33:33 all walks of life with lots of different experiences that this resonated with so there's not really a, you know, an average Chubstr user. And part of that is because there aren't a lot of resources even 10 years in, there aren't a lot of resources that

15:33:52 are like Chubstr, that offer what Chubstr offers, so there aren't a lot of places for a specific type of person to go, you know, so, so it's, it kind of runs the spectrum.

15:34:05 You know it's, I've done surveys in the past and kind of gotten a feel for, you know, some of, some of that demographic kind of information, but I mean it's still, it runs the spectrum. You've got people who are coming to the site for the community, you've

15:34:21 got people who are just looking for clothes. You've got people who are looking for, you know, fast fashion, a \$10 jacket or whatever but you've also got people who are willing to throw down three grand on like a Burberry trench coat.

15:34:35 So, it runs the spectrum as far as what people are looking for, and, you know, one of the things that I realized early on was that if I wanted companies, especially apparel companies to pay attention to this audience, I needed to be able to show them

15:34:53 kind of the business case. So, you know, that's, that's also where the subversive activism kind of comes in is that it's talking to these companies and getting them to change their minds about how they make clothing or how they, how they portray their

15:35:08 models. To start using bigger models, to start catering to this audience, you know, things like that. I mean, those were all things that at first when I started this nobody would give me the time of day. I'd reach out to companies and they, they wouldn't,

15:35:24 they wouldn't say anything to me. They didn't want to talk. They didn't want to talk about any of their deficiencies in this category, and I get that

because that is what they do. They, you know, their PR teams are like no, no, no, no, no we're not going there.

15:35:39 Fine. So I had to keep really pushing and pushing and start working with smaller brands and kind of worked my way up and be able to show, okay, this audience, fat people want to see themselves represented in popular culture, in photo shoots, in catalogs

15:35:58 for the clothes and the products you're trying to sell to us. If you do this, you will make money, you will make more money.

15:36:07 If you build it they will come on.

15:36:08 Exactly. and so it's really been that whole thing and it is still a decade and it's still difficult. It is still, it takes time and effort to change people's minds and you have to really scrape and claw through to get people to understand and take a

15:36:26 chance on, on doing this and so I think a lot of companies use Chubstr as kind of a testing ground to see, okay, if we do a partnership with Chubstr, how's this going to do? You know, and so that then they can kind of see what works and what doesn't.

15:36:42 And sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. And what I really find is that if a company is willing to kind of let go of the reins and, you know, let me take something, create a photoshoot or do an article or do a video series around their brand in

15:37:04 a way that's compelling, then they see a good return. But if they don't, then they won't and, you know, I can tell pretty quickly, pretty early on in dealing with different companies, kind of where they're at, as far as that comfort level goes. So it's, it's

15:37:16 interesting. I really feel like we've got a long way to go. We got a long way to go. It's, it, some companies get it. Most don't.

15:37:25 So are you still cold calling companies? Are companies reaching out to you now? You know, aside from the first few? So the first couple years, you know, nobody would talk to me. Nothing was, nothing was happening, you know, with those companies. I was just

15:37:42 writing content and doing photos and that kind of thing.

15:37:46 And I got a company to work with me and so I was able to build that out and kind of show, Okay, this works. People want to buy these things. And then I did an interview with The New York Times, about two years in and everything just exploded. It was,

15:38:02 it was like, I, I didn't I, I was not prepared, you know. I didn't know what to expect from something like that so it opened up a lot of opportunity, all of a sudden. Like, I don't know, right after that, a production company reached out. It was like, we'd

15:38:19 like to talk to you about potentially doing a reality show. What do you think about that? Luckily, I was not down with that idea and I was not good.

15:38:27 They sent me a little camera, followed me around for a day. I'm very very boring, so it worked out so that never happened. So, you know, but all these other things and all these other opportunities started to come out of it. And, and companies saw that article

15:38:41 and so they started to reach out and they wanted to partner and they wanted to do all these different things. And so you know it, I got lucky in that people just started to reach out to Chubstr, and we really haven't had to do any outreach, you know. We

15:39:01 haven't had to do cold calling or any of that now as Chubstr has grown. I think that's going to change in the near future because companies are reaching out but I think there are a lot of companies that should be reaching out that aren't. So I want to be

15:39:14 more proactive and really push those things forward.

15:39:19 So I have a question for you from the chat. And audience, you can start adding other questions to the chat that I will incorporate into our talk with Bruce today.

15:39:27 The first question is from Melissa and Melissa wants to know, How has your activism changed over the 10 years that Chubstr has existed? Have your actions, methods or language changed as a result of the work that you've been doing with Chubstr? A lot has

15:39:45 changed. A lot has changed as far as, you know, again when I started this, it was really me living in a small town in the Midwest,

15:39:55 having an idea of what I thought this was going to be, I had a very specific and very clear idea of okay, well you know. Chubstr. It's going to be, you know, a lot of guys are exactly like me that are just having these, you know, these experiences trying

15:40:10 to find clothes and trying to fit in and trying to exist in their fat bodies. And I very quickly realized that that was not the case as people started to reach out. Early on, we would share photos of, you know, reader photos. They'd send in their pictures

15:40:26 of looks they put together that they liked which was really cool to be able to do that and show somebody else who was really happy about the way that they looked, the clothes that they were wearing, whatever their, whatever their situation was in the

15:40:37 photo, that kind of thing. And they were telling their stories and their stories were all very different from mine and so I realized that, you know, it is,

15:40:49 there's a big world out there and it's not just about me. And I tried to really pivot, I think as far as doing my best to share other people's stories, to show what other people's lives are like, the experiences that they've had, and how they're getting

15:41:09 through things. And that is a really big focus of where I want Chubstr to go for the next 10 years, is really telling other people's stories in a really compelling way. I think, I think that there are so many people that are overlooked, and there are so many people

15:41:27 who are just doing interesting things who happened to be fat. And I really want to spotlight all of that because I think that's also important because we're always told when you're fat that you're lazy, that you can't do things, you're, like you said, you

15:41:43 get overlooked for jobs. It's harder to, to make money. It's harder to live and to fit in, in some cases and I want to show that there are a lot of different people having a lot of different experiences. And yeah, you know, I think that this first 10 years

15:42:01 has really been me trying to build this thing up and, and getting to a point where it makes sense to make it more about other people, than about me. And I think over the last few years that's really where I've tried to go. Early on, it was very easy because

15:42:18 if I needed a fat model, here I was. So at work so I could jump in, do a photo shoot and be good to go. So, yeah, you know, I think, I think as far as, as

far as all of that goes with, you know, in the next few months you'll start to see more writers with different

15:42:35 backgrounds who are not me. You're going to see people with different experiences writing articles, doing photo shoots, doing videos, some different video series.

15:42:47 I am very excited to be able to do videos again. We had a really major plan in place for 2020 that the pandemic put on hold because to do all the video stuff, you had to be around a lot of people, you know. We all had to be able to be around each other

15:43:01 and that wasn't going to happen. So, you know, 2022 is probably when we're going to get back to that stuff but I'm really excited to incorporate more people that are not me, you know. It's it's grown to a point where, You know, it's good but it's grown

15:43:20 to a point where, if I do one thing then other things kind of drop off. And I can't do everything myself anymore and I don't want to. I really, I have bigger goals for all of this and I know what I want it to be and so that's where I'm trying to focus.

15:43:39 So what advice would you have for somebody who is, who is wanting to get started as a model or a designer or in the world of big men's and masculine looks fashion?

15:43:55 Like what's what's the first step?

15:43:58 Yeah, you know, I think there, I think there are a few different things. Advice for different people depending on what they're doing. So if you are thinking about starting a big and tall clothing line, a masculine clothing line,

15:44:12 do your research. Make sure that you are making clothes for bigger bodies. Use bigger fit models. Think about the problems that bigger people have with their clothing. Can they move in it? Does it stretch? Is it going to fit and sit in the places you want

15:44:27 it to sit and, you know, does it look right on bigger bodies? Think about different body types. There are some brands that specifically do that; they think about different body types and they'll make something for, you know, people who carry most of their

15:44:44 weight in their, in their stomach. Or people who are shaped in different ways. And they have different fits for those different body types. That's great.

15:44:52 I understand that not every, if you're starting a big and tall brand, not everybody can do that? You know, that takes a lot of money. That takes a lot of time and effort, but think through what your customer needs.

15:45:03 Make sure that fit is there. Make sure that style is there. Honestly one of the things that, that people who are coming through Chubstr and reaching out, what they're looking for are a lot of the, they want the mainstream stuff. They want the stuff that

15:45:17 they're seeing on smaller bodies but in their size and there's no reason that we shouldn't have that stuff. And it's still very difficult to find brands that do that or that do it well, because there's still this idea that this is an audience that fat

15:45:34 people don't want that stuff. And that they aren't willing to buy those kinds of products and that's absolutely not true. So I would encourage anybody who is listening to this to.

15:45:56 If you're thinking about starting a clothing line please do. Please do. We need them, especially when it comes to masculine fashion, there's a lot missing.

It's still very early days and if you do it and you do it right, it can be very successful. And it can be, it can be something that's, that's pretty,
15:46:06 can be something that's, that's pretty awesome. So, yeah, I would definitely say, you know, look at what you can do. If you're looking at writing, and you're getting in this area, which is very different from making the clothes,
15:46:19 write about the things that are important to you. Write a lot, a lot, a lot. Write as much as you can and know that it's going to take time.
15:46:29 If you're looking at kind of getting started and you're trying to get, you know, find your place and all of this, reach out to, you know, publications like Chubstr, reach out to Chubstr or, I mean there are tons of other, you know, plus size blogs out
15:46:44 there.
15:46:46 Maybe not. Maybe not as many for the masculine stuff but, you know, reach out. I'm always looking for people to write so, you know, just write about the things that are important to you.
15:46:57 If you do that, and you think about these things. I always come up with things or I'll see something in the news that I'm like okay well that needs to be written about so I've got lots, lots of lists, but I will never get through them.
15:47:10 So, if you want to write.
15:47:12 Write. You know, the last part that I would say is if you are trying to establish yourself as a writer,
15:47:21 one of the questions we get the most is how do you, how do I become a plus size male model? I mean seriously, like all the time because I kind of stumbled into it.
15:47:31 It was not something that I ever set out to do and then companies started to reach out about doing campaigns for them and so I was able to do some things for Columbia Sportswear and DXL and Bonobos and King Size and you know it's, it's been cool to
15:47:46 be able to do that.
15:47:48 So we get a lot of questions, well you know, what it's a lot of well, if he's doing it I ought to be able to do it. It was hard, and it was not something I set out to do so.
15:47:59 I would say that you need to be seen, you know. You need to get yourself out there; establish yourself. I mean everybody's on Instagram now. Put up photos, talk to other people in the community, get involved. I mean this also goes for if you want to be an
15:48:15 influencer, whatever that is these days. That's, you know, that's also what you want to do. You want to, you want to have a specific voice within the community, and you need to be able to share that, you need to support other people.
15:48:33 It's been really cool seeing people start to talk about these issues over the last 10 years or people start websites or, you know, create social media,
15:48:50 you know, presence that wasn't there before. It's just, it's awesome to see those things grow and I, I think that there's still a lot of room for people with really interesting voices to get out there and just talk. Just talk about the things that you feel.
15:49:03 Share your photos. Really get out there and, in a lot of interesting ways. So, don't think about it too much. Don't overthink it. Because I think a lot of people are probably like me, if I think too much about the thing that I'm doing or that I want to
15:49:18 do, then it makes it more difficult for me to do it, or I don't do it as

well. And I get stuck in my own head. So, yeah.

15:49:28 So we have another question from the audience. What are your favorite resources for non binary folks who are looking for a fashion that's not specifically masc or fem?

15:49:42 You know it has been, this last year with the pandemic and everything it's just been, there haven't been a whole lot of options. Things that I'm liking right now that I'm, that I'm seeing, I'm going to cheat and pull a couple things up on my phone here because

15:49:57 my memory is never good when I'm trying to grab some of the stuff off the top of my head.

15:50:06 I'm excited about, there's a new Canadian brand that I think is close to or just got funded for their Kickstarter, they're called Wide +he Brand. I love what they're doing.

15:50:19 I think it's some really cool stuff.

15:50:22 Definitely. Definitely worth taking a look at.

15:50:26 You know I like a lot of the things that they're doing.

15:50:31 You know, one of the problems that we really run into is that there aren't as many options on the men's or masculine side, as there are on the women's plus size side of things. You've got the individual designers, you've got like the, the one person show

15:50:49 that creates something, puts it out there.

15:50:52 You've got the kind of mid range brands and then you've got the bigger brands. We don't really have a lot of that. we've kind of got, you know, individual designers and then we've got like our, you know, department stores and our DXLs and King Size,

15:51:09 we really, really need more people getting into this area. We see a lot of brands that kind of get started, or companies that are like we're doing big and tall now or we're doing extended sizes.

15:51:21 Have you seen our 2X, you know, and that's where they stop. So, and then they don't feature fat models in any of the clothes that they're that they're putting out so we run into this whole problem of.

15:51:35 They're just not promoting it right and there just aren't a lot of options, so it's it's difficult. It's difficult. So, you know, you've got to really look hard to find things.

15:51:50 As far as things that I'm really seeing out there that that I'm liking right now.

15:51:57 There are a lot of articles on Chubstr.com which is where I put everything so that I don't have to remember all of this stuff but I like Good Counsel. I think Good Counsel is doing some really interesting stuff.

15:52:09 They go up to 10X, which is very cool because most brands do not.

15:52:16 You know I, I'm digging what they're doing. I also started experimenting with Prime Wardrobe, Amazon's thing; their subscription that's not even really a subscription, just their box service.

15:52:29 And it's been pretty cool. You basically can go through Amazon and when you find almost anything that's on amazon.com, if you find it in your size, then you can add it to Prime Wardrobe and it lets you take like eight different things at a time.

15:52:45 In fact, this camp shirt that I'm wearing right now is something that I just got yesterday from Amazon.

15:52:53 Just wanted to try something different. I've been in T shirts and joggers

for the last 14 months so it was time for a little color, but yeah you know that's a good place to kind of look for things.

15:53:04 I don't have a ton of options right now. Sadly, and it's been a real frustration for me personally for the last couple months as things have started to not open up but we see there's like a light at the end of the tunnel as far as people are getting vaccinated.

15:53:18 We're seeing that we're going to be able to hopefully get out again into the world and see each other and be around each other again.

15:53:26 I don't feel like, I feel like options are kind of going the opposite way instead of there being more options, there are less established brands that aren't, that are deciding not to carry as many sizes, or that are changing the, the way that they are creating

15:53:46 clothing for bigger bodies. So they don't necessarily fit as well for a variety of bodies. It's, it's disappointing. Right now, and I, you know, I'm I'm sad about that. But on the other hand, I'm also getting a lot of outreach through Chubstr from people

15:54:03 who are like, I've been at home for 14 months. And I've decided to start a clothing brand, you know. We're going to do this or that, or this, you know. So we're seeing that, and that is also, that's great.

15:54:18 We want more of that. I just, it just feels like we have a long way to go. Now you know I'm excited about the progress that we've seen and that has been made, but it just still feels like we have a long way to go.

15:54:31 So, not a great answer, but that's it. We all, we have time for maybe one more question from the, from the audience if anyone wants to put a question in. While I give you time to do that, I just want to say in response to that last question,

15:54:47 One of the brands that I see that does great stuff, that I think they maybe use the term unisex but I see a lot of folks I follow online who are gender queer or non binary really loving on Tomboy X. And they do,

15:55:04 I think up to 4X and they are mostly known for their undergarments. But they, but they do tees and tanks, I think, and maybe are coming out with some lounge wear soon. So I would check them out and I would see who is using their hashtag because I, I noticed

15:55:25 a lot of my, the non binary folks that I follow on Instagram, really love them. And I think they create some community around LGBTQIA folks too.

15:55:31 Yeah, Tomboy X does some great things.

15:55:35 Yeah.

15:55:35 Okay. So last question from the chat. If you had an investor, wanting to fund an area of masculine plus size market that is not currently being served and a designer who was ready to play in that area,

15:55:49 what would you design/encourage the designer to work on?

15:55:54 Um, it might be easier for me to say here's what you shouldn't work on.

15:55:59 I think there are a lot of people who are doing t shirts right now. I think there are some, some good things and this is not to say that, that somebody couldn't come in and do a T shirt and knock it out of the park. But I would say that what we are seeing

15:56:12 a lot of right now, we're seeing a lot of T shirts. We're seeing underwear.

15:56:20 We're not seeing a lot of other things. I want more shorts, I really want shorts. I want more, I want more shirts with you know more, they call them novelty,

novelty shirts. I want more patterns. I want things that stand out, things that are modern, that have

15:56:36 a unique look, that have a point of view. You know I want more of that stuff and I know that is really what we're, what is lacking. We're seeing a lack of that stuff in big and tall right now; plus size, extended size, whatever you want to call it. Everybody

15:56:54 calls it something different. We're just, we're not seeing as many of those things.

15:57:01 Do pants.

15:57:03 Do chinos, do try denim. You know, there are places to go for some of that stuff but it's not all great.

15:57:12 Even Levi's has, you know, their handful, or a few more options but they're not doing the the most stylish things in extended sizes and they should be.

15:57:26 I think that what I would say is, look at what's on the market, and then look, look at what's missing. And if you're doing that research and you're looking at those things,

15:57:35 you'll see that there are a lot of things that, that need to be done, that just aren't right now. And I have an entire like wish list of things that I would like to see.

15:57:48 And I am hoping that in the near future we get more of that and I've really been like holding off on, you know, we've had opportunities through Chubstr over the years to do, clothing. You know, to do clothes, clothing lines or... You read my mind, that was going to be my

15:58:06 next question.

15:58:08 And honestly, it's been something that I've stayed away from because I really felt, especially after the first like four or five years, I really felt like more companies were going to come out with extended size product and do it right.

15:58:27 And that has not been the case, especially not with established brands. A lot of established brands just aren't doing it, or they're still hiding it or they try it and they're not putting enough promotion into it.

15:58:40 You can't just launch extended sizes, put it out there and say okay it's going to sell. If you're not going to tell people about it, you're not going to continue to put bigger models in the product,

15:58:53 put those photos out in your catalogs, in your marketing, in your Facebook ads, then you're not going to see that return. And that has been the problem time and time again, is that these companies don't get that and they drop it.

15:59:08 And so...Yes, yes, if you build it we will come only works if we know that you built it.

15:59:14 If you build it in a cave somewhere that we don't know about, we can't come to that. Exactly. And you have to be willing to look at this stuff and say okay what's working, what's not, what should we be doing? Don't be afraid of pushback because you will

15:59:28 get pushback, because that's what you want. This is a customer that is always underserved and not everything is going to fit everyone exactly the way they want it to.

15:59:39 But if you're doing this right, you're listening and you're thinking about how you can make your products better. And all of this stuff needs to fire on all cylinders, for it to work, and so many companies are not willing to put that effort in. And so

15:59:53 they fail or they stay away from it, and the ones that do that do it

right, they're successful, but they're few and far between. So my hope is that that changes.

16:00:06 I think that we're at a point now where, if it is not going to change you have to do something about it yourself. So I would encourage anybody watching this to try, you know. You want to start out, you want to start a clothing line? Do it. You want to

16:00:21 fund somebody who has a cool idea for how to make something that's missing in the market. There's a lot of stuff that's missing in the market. There are lots of things on the masculine side that we just don't have.

16:00:35 And it's not always going to be easy for sure, but it's worth it. So try.

16:00:42 Bruce is there anything we didn't ask you about today, that you really think we need to know about masculine fashion or about Chubstr or about you?

16:00:52 You know I don't, I don't think so. We've covered a lot of ground, you know. I, I am, I'm still surprised by all of the amazing things that have come out of doing this; the amazing people that I've met, the opportunities that I've had, the things that have grown

16:01:08 out of this and the community of people that get something out of this thing that I started on Tumblr because I was frustrated. And I am very excited to see where this goes for the next 10 years.

16:01:25 I am really looking at growing this out and bring in more people to turn it into something a little different.

16:01:35 Taking the core of what's important here and just growing that, so yeah, I mean, I thank you for everything you're doing and for letting me talk about it. I mean, I certainly would never have guessed that I'd be doing something like this, you know. Ten years,

16:01:52 ten years ago that never would have crossed my mind so it's pretty awesome.

16:01:57 Well, we are really grateful for your love, love and labor in this area and all the ways that you highlight fat visibility through your work.

16:02:08 And y'all heard the man. He said he's looking for some more voices. So if you are interested in any of these aspects of fashion that Bruce talked about, you should reach out. How is, what's the best way for them to reach out to you.

16:02:21 Yes, so, so you can use the contact form at Chubstr.com there's a Chubster.com/contact. There's a form there, you can reach out that way, go to any of our social channels. it's @Chubstr everywhere so somebody'll get back to you and you know, we

16:02:41 we can talk. Definitely, definitely looking for more writers. I really want to amp that up so if you have something you want to write about and you have something that you think would make for a good fit, please reach out.

16:02:55 Fantastic. And we should say for folks who are listening and maybe not looking at this that Chubstr is C H U B S T R. No, e. That's right.

16:03:07 And, and so we want to thank Bruce Sturgell for being with us today for the NAAFA webinar series. Once again we want to thank Jonathan and Arty from pro bono ASL for their interpreting today. And we want to thank you all for being with us. We will see you in a couple of days for the next NAAFA webinar, with artist Toni Tails. Thanks everyone. Have a great day. Thank you.