



Episode 237: World Travel With Kids,
WorldSchooling & Entrepreneurship With
Wonderling Family

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Katie: Hello and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. And today, we're gonna talk about a subject that many of you ask about and I've never really tackled before. I'm here with my friend, Stephanie Langford. She's a dear friend. She's also a wife, mom, entrepreneur, and world traveler. She and her husband, Ryan, are raising and worldschooling 5 kids, aged 3 to 14. We'll talk about what that means in this episode. Together, they run Ultimate Bundles at ultimatebundles.com, where they work with online content creators and bloggers to curate incredible digital libraries for really amazing prices. In 2013, get this, they backpacked with their family, with their kids, around the world for a year to 32 countries, which, in my mind, makes them amazing travel experts. Since that time, they've established a home base in Ottawa, Canada, while continuing to travel internationally three to six months each year. You can find them sharing their family's unconventional and frequently nomadic lifestyle at wonderling.com or follow them on Instagram, [@wonderlingfamily](https://www.instagram.com/wonderlingfamily). Stephanie, thanks for being here.

Stephanie: Thank you. I'm so glad to be here. This is fun.

Katie: It is fun. It's fun to get to talk to a friend and it's fun to get to talk about a subject that you are very much an expert in, and I think a lot of parents have so many questions in both on the entrepreneurship side and the travel side. And so I wanna start there a little bit. Can you just give us an overview of how you became an entrepreneur?

Stephanie: Sure. Well, in a sense, I was kind of an accidental entrepreneur because my husband, I'm trying to go back how far, I mean, probably about 13 years ago, he started talking to me about, "I'm gonna start my own business one day. I really wanna become an entrepreneur." And at the time, I was sort of like, "Okay, like, that's kind of a nice idea, but let's just push that off a little bit." I was very stability loving. I was risk-averse. I didn't really wanna try anything like that. And so he waited a couple of years, and then he started talking about it again. Like it was just this thing he kept going back to. But kind of a funny thing happened in the middle of that. So, my husband, he had cancer. And after he was in remission, I started to feel like, you know, we've just come through this really long, hard journey, and I needed a bit of an outlet for myself and I'd also been learning a lot about health and wellness and different ways to take care of him and to help his body recover after the ordeal that he'd been through.

So I decided, "I'm gonna start a blog," just kind of this fun thing I do. I get up in the morning before the kids. At that time, we had a toddler and a baby. I'll get up in the mornings and I'll do it during nap time. It'll just sort of be this fun little thing that I do. And surprisingly, to me, that grew into something. It grew faster than I thought it would, and I realized, "Oh, I can actually make an income." And when I did begin making an income, I mean, nobody was more shocked than me that I had kind of accidentally become an entrepreneur. Now, I had this online business, and I continued to grow it, and it developed into a full-time income. And, ultimately, I sold that business, and we went on to develop other businesses, including the one that we now run together. But that's sort of how I got into it.

So it's funny because he really had that entrepreneurial spark and vision, and I just sort of stumbled into it. But my success in starting my blog and in bringing in an income gave me the confidence to say, "Oh, okay, you wanna do this? I'm on board. Let's do it together." And so that was how we really began to move forward. Then we created a music school and then we created Ultimate Bundles. And so, now, that's really a very integral part of our family's lifestyle, and I actually love it. I love it.

Katie: That's so awesome. And I'm curious because I feel like it's a big jump. I know I've heard your story personally, but I wanna hear you tell the whole thing here. I feel like it's a big jump to go from like awesome, you created this amazing business that's helping all these people, to "We're gonna travel," and not just, "We're gonna travel," but, "We're gonna travel for a year with all of our kids." I think many families dream of traveling more, and most people have some kind of travel on their bucket list, but the idea of backpacking for a year with kids sounds really impossible to a lot of parents. So, how did that idea come about, and how did you make it work?

Stephanie: So it began to come about when we had both been running our sort of...we had sort of these parallel businesses going. I had my professional blog, and then he had his music school, and we'd been doing them for a couple of years. And finally, for the first time in our marriage, we were feeling like, "Okay, like, we don't have any debt. We've got a little bit of savings. We're kind of getting on steadier financial ground. Now,

what?" And he started playing around with this idea of, "What if we went and lived in another country for a year? Like, let's just pick somewhere random. Like, let's go live in Argentina for a year." And at first, I was like, "I don't know. I'm kinda happy here. I like our friends. I like our homeschooling community. I don't really feel a need to go do that." But the more he got talking, he started playing around with things like, "Well, what if we went to four different countries over the course of the year?" And then it was like, I don't know, a switch turned on in my brain, and I started thinking about the possibility.

So I got really excited, and we began brainstorming all of the things that we could do. And what felt really important about the trip to us was that, not only was it gonna be a really amazing educational experience for our kids and a bonding experience for us as a family, but it also felt like it would help us learn to run our businesses better because we would have to not micromanage so much, we would have to find ways to work smarter, not harder to kind of get around times when we were in, you know, weird time zones, or we had to take a break because of a travel day. And so it felt like it was going to really force us to just do a better job with everything. So all of these things sort of combined, and I felt like, "Oh, yeah, maybe we could really do this." And I don't even think I knew quite how crazy we were being. Like, it sounded really crazy when we started talking about it and we started planning. But honestly, it wasn't until like a month before, and we were like really ready to do it, we had prepped everything, the house was all packed up, and we were, you know, renting it out to somebody else, and we'd bought all our gear, and then I was like, "Oh, wow." Like, we don't know what we're doing.

We haven't actually ever traveled to a developing country with our kids. We haven't traveled anywhere other than to the United States with our kids. So this is a really, really big difference for us, and I think that was actually part of the beauty of it is we didn't know exactly what we were doing, but we leapt into it anyways because we had, at this point, developed this vision and this excitement for it. So we kind of just went for it, and, you know, it required a lot of work. We had to decide, "What are we gonna do with all of our things back home? How are we going to cut back our expenses so that we can actually not carry all of our regular expenses?" Because that's one of the tricky parts, you know, when you go on vacation, you're carrying your home expenses, but then also the vacation expenses. Well, we didn't wanna do that. That wasn't sustainable for a year. So we needed to cut back everything at home so that we could only have our on-the-road expenses as we were working. You know, that's how we would continue to fund our travel.

So there was a lot of things that we had to figure out, and it did help that we were already homeschoolers, and we had been homeschoolers right from the beginning. So we didn't have the limitation of, "Well, what do we do with school?" For us, it was, "Well, school just comes on the road with us, just like what we do at home." So some pieces were easy, some pieces were trickier, but, yeah, that's kind of how it came about.

Katie: I love that you brought up the expenses and minimizing the ones at home while you were traveling, because I think that's also, maybe a lot of people have a skewed idea of how much it actually costs if you do it a certain way to travel the world. I think it seems like, to many people, that can be a tremendous, tremendous amount of money and something you save your whole life for. But I know from talking to you, you guys were able to make it work on a budget, and you certainly didn't spend hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars traveling the world for a year. So, can you speak a little more to how you were able to make it budget friendly, especially when you were traveling in a group of six at the time, right?

Stephanie: Yeah, that's right. So we had six, and out of those six, five required plane tickets, because we had one infant with us as well. So it was definitely a huge expense, but the big picture way of how we did it is that by getting rid of all of our expenses back home. So for us, that meant letting go of the house that we'd been living in, and we just kept the things that were really, really important to us and we put those in storage. We sold our vehicles. You know, we canceled everything that we could back home. I think the only things that we still had were like our bank account and maybe a Netflix account, I don't know. But we basically had nothing back home. And so that was really key, and then the other key was living on the road and not vacationing on the road, and there's a really big difference. You know, we weren't staying in hotels all the time. We never stayed in a resort. We were not living the life. We were living locally as much as possible.

So for us, that means renting an apartment or renting a house somewhere. And sometimes, you know, that's maybe only for a week, and sometimes, that was for as much as four, five, six weeks at a time. And what that allowed us to do was to just go and shop at the markets, like the locals. And we would walk around, and we would take public transportation, and we would do our own laundry, and we were not doing excursions every day. I mean, often, the experience for us was just, "Oh, this is what it's like to live in Kenya, or to live in Argentina, or to live in, you know, southern France." It was just the experience of living in the place and not that we were doing these, you know, wild and crazy activities every day. We did some of that, of course, and so that's where you get into more of the expenses. When you, you know, do a tour, or when you want to go to a particular famous site, that can bring in more expense. And then also the countries that you choose sort of determines your cost level.

So we tried to have a really healthy mix of more inexpensive countries, and then a few that were kind of more midlevel, and then just a couple that were more expensive and those ones we spent a very short amount of time in. And we were super frugal while we were in those countries. So you kind of find ways to balance it out, and, you know, I would say, most months, our expenses on the road were actually pretty similar to our expenses living back in Canada. I mean, Canada is not a cheap country when you have six kids, and we were able to make it work out pretty similarly. So the big expense for us was really just our flights, and we had to save up for those. We did already have a little bit of savings, we continued to save throughout the year, and then we also continued to put some extra money aside, because like I said, we were basically just living a pretty normal month-to-month expense sort of budget.

And so, really, the flights were the biggest thing, and you don't even have to do as many flights as we did. I mean, we were a little bit crazy. We went to 32 countries in a year. That's a lot of flights. And we did as much of it by land as we could. We traveled by long distance bus. We traveled by train. We did whatever we could to cut the cost down, and then we would fly when we needed to. We also tried to keep a very linear kind of logical path of flight as much as possible, so that we were just doing little hops and not the big hops. Because, you know, it is the bigger hops across the ocean and, you know, from one continent to another, that's where a lot of the money comes in. So, you know, without going into more detail, those are some of the ways that we saved money. And, you know, it doesn't have to be a one-year trip for people. That was what we chose to do, but even just choosing to go to one or two countries, I think it could be so much more within reach than a lot of people think that it is.

Katie: Yeah, and such an amazing experience with kids, especially, to see another country and another culture and to see just the differences in lifestyle. What were a couple, just the highlights, of a couple of your favorite places and maybe a couple that surprised you by how much you liked them?

Stephanie: Yeah. It's always so hard. It depends on the day that you ask me, because it kind of changes what sticks out to me. We have some really, really great memories of our time living in Europe, not only on that trip, because we've also continued to travel there, but we've spent some time living more extensively in southern France and in western France just renting a house there, and that's a place that we love and we feel like there's just a very different pace to life there, and we really enjoy it. We love their appreciation of good local healthy food. And, yeah, we just enjoy it so much.

We also fell in love with Turkey like really hard. We spent a month there. And I know that Turkey is not a place that's on a lot of people's radars, but, man, that is a phenomenal family-friendly country. And we found that people were so open to our children. They were so kind and generous with them. And I feel like they were more open to us just because we were traveling with our children, because they really value children in their culture. But their food is phenomenal. I mean, the history and the ruins there were just amazing and the scenery and the beach. I mean, I could kinda go on. Turkey is incredible.

We had a really great time in Cambodia. We went to see the temple complex of Angkor Wat, and that was a phenomenal time. We only spent about a week there, but it was one of those weeks that just stands out in my memory, because we just had so much fun exploring the temples and learning the history. And, you know, you're really allowed to get in there and climb around it. And, you know, we were climbing up to the top of this really tall kind of pyramid-like temples, and they are the ones that are being overtaken by the forest. And it's just so fascinating. I mean, it's like a huge playground for kids. So those are some of the really amazing things.

We were surprised by how much we enjoyed being in Rwanda. We rented a house on a church property for three weeks. We stayed in Kigali, which is the capital. And there was something about...we didn't really do a lot in Rwanda as far as being tourists. Like, we really kinda just lived there for three weeks. But there was something about just living the African lifestyle and, you know, going to the market and just hanging out with locals. We had a really, really good time there. So that was a really pleasant surprise for us. I could go on. I love so many places.

Katie: I'm sure, and there's endless more ones to always find, which is the beauty of travel. So you mentioned worldschooling in passing, and as a kind of an add-on to homeschooling or an evolution for you guys. That may not be a familiar term to a lot of people. So, can you walk us through what worldschooling is and then how you made it work? Because I know, for our homeschool, we have books, and a lot of it is digital. And when we travel for long periods of time, we've converted that to iPads or laptops. But how did you logistically make that work to keep up with school while you were on the road?

Stephanie: Yeah. I mean, I think the main difference between homeschooling and worldschooling is just that, when we worldschool, we try as much as possible to incorporate the different elements of the places where

we go into the educational experience. And, of course, people do that at home when they're homeschooling, too. I mean, you go to a museum. You go to a local festival. You know, you try making different foods. I mean, there are ways that we do that already. But in worldschooling, you're in these different places, and so there's an incredible array of things that are available to you. And so it's really just about taking advantage of those and immersing yourself into the culture as much as possible while continuing to do kind of the basic things that everybody does when they're homeschooling.

So that means we do bring math curriculum, we do language arts curriculum. You know, our kids have journals, and they still have to write essays. And we try to...they continue to read a lot of books, a lot of classics especially, but then we also seek out books that might be historical fiction that takes place in the country where we're in, and it might give them sort of a richer understanding of the culture that we're experiencing. So we'll sort of tie in things like that, as well as local language lessons, if we can find any kind of, you know, a local art lesson or if they can develop a skill while we're on the road. So my oldest daughter has done her scuba diving certification, and our next oldest, who is 11, he would like to do his certification really soon as well. And then our two oldest kids, along with my husband, have done their paragliding, and they've done that while traveling. And so there's a lot of skills they can develop.

So, I mean, really, we have the same mindset as any other homeschooler. We're kind of just doing it in different places. And like you said, we do as much digital as we can. So we bring laptops, we bring iPads. Our kids use a math curriculum that's online. The only paper book curriculum that they have is their language arts, and we chose one that incorporated, you know, reading comprehension, spelling, grammar, art appreciation. It incorporated a whole bunch of things together in one curriculum. So that felt like it worked really well for us. And then each of our kids have Kindles as soon as they hit reading age and they're capable of reading an early novel, that's when we buy our kids a Kindle. So they all have their own. We're constantly loading them up with books as we go. And then, other than that, we just use some different iPad apps, especially for the younger ones, and then the older ones do things like they're studying Spanish with an online program right now, and they've studied French in the same way. So, that's kind of an overview of what we do.

Katie: I love it, and I also feel like it's important to mention that you guys did this with backpacks. Like, everything that you brought with you, you guys could carry yourselves in backpacks, and you were very mobile. Like, you didn't have these big, huge rolling bags. I saw you guys on one of these trips, and it's truly amazing. Like, even your little ones carry their own little, tiny backpack. Can you talk about that?

Stephanie: Yeah. So, in our family, we kind of have a one-bag-per-person rule, and that means each person carries their own bag. So mom and dad each have a bigger backpack, and then we also have a daypack as well. We're responsible for carrying whatever we bring, so we all have to make sure that we are not carrying too much, that we're not adding an extra weight. And, you know, one of the rules that we have for our kids is they'll frequently ask, "Well, can I bring this? Can I buy that?" And the rule is, "Well, you can if you can carry it happily and you're gonna be okay with having, you know, it in your bag and on your back on a regular basis." So we tried to find backpacks that were suitable for the size of our kids. We didn't...you know, they've got growing bodies. We don't want to overload them with something that's going to hurt them or is going to be too much weight for them to carry.

So, yeah, we just did a lot of research and tried to find bags that we felt were kind of suitable. And then they each carry a capsule wardrobe, just like we do as adults when we travel. We have a very small wardrobe. We try to make everything match together. Typically, we have one pair of shoes, usually something like a closed-toed KEEN sandal, something that's rugged, but that can get wet and you can stick socks under if you wanna, you know, a little bit dorky, but it works. So, usually, they have that, or if we're, you know, traveling in a slightly colder climate, then we might also have a pair of runners or else we might have flip-flops if we're gonna be at the beach a lot. But it's really pretty minimal. So they've got their clothes, they've got a pair of shoes, they've got an iPad or a laptop and a Kindle, and typically, they might bring like a stuffed animal or like a tiny bag of Lego. And, really, that's about it, and they just learn to be creative and find things to do while they're on the road, without toys.

Katie: I love that, and we can all learn so much from that just in how little we actually need in our normal daily lives and how much extra stuff all of us have. I think nobody's exempt from that in the modern world, at least. I very much love that saying that travel is the only thing you can buy that makes you richer. And I'm curious, I know that, certainly, like not most of us will never travel for a year straight, so I think you have a very unique perspective. And I'm curious, what were some of the biggest lessons that really stuck with you from your travels? Did you have aspects of your life that changed after traveling for so long and seeing so much of the world and so many other cultures?

Stephanie: Yeah, absolutely. It's hard not to want to evaluate everything in your life when you travel for that period of time, because when we, wherever we live, if it's somewhere in North America, or Australia, or the UK, I mean, when you live in that place, you're saturated with that culture and that particular way of seeing the world. And, of course, there's differences within that, different people have different views. But, generally, we all live pretty similarly. And then you go over to another country, and you stay there for a more extended period of time. And especially if, you know, like us, you're experiencing multiple different cultures over the course of a year, one after another. And people do things really differently, and you notice it, and you begin to question just your own biases and your own assumptions and your own world view. And there are hard parts of that. It can be hard to question what you've always believed or what you've always thought, and really enriching parts of it, because we grew so much as people by learning to ask better questions, by becoming better observers of the world around us, and the way that different people functioned, and, you know, the happiness that a lot of people had with so much less than us, and just so many things. So that definitely changed us a lot.

I would say the other things that, you know, were more the intangibles, but we definitely noticed within our family, is we all developed sort of more endurance, I guess, more willingness to push through, to be willing to do really hard things. We developed kind of more grit, I would say, more tenacity. And because we often were in hard situations, especially as budget travelers. I mean, if you're a luxury traveler and you've got somebody, you know, you're taking a really nice flight, and you're having somebody come and pick you up at the airport and bring you to your beautiful hotel, I mean, that's one thing, but that is not what we were doing. We were very much budget, independent travelers, making our way, taking those flights at terrible times of night, trying to figure out how to get from point A to B to C by ourselves, and sometimes that stuff is really tricky.

You run into unexpected bumps, and you have to be flexible, and you have to try to keep a smile on your face. And especially when you're doing it with four, or now we have five little kids, you have to be able to set an

example for your kids of trying to have a good attitude in the midst of those hard and challenging moments, and saying, "Okay, how are we gonna tackle this as a family? What can we be thankful for right now? How can we make the best of this hard situation?" So we had to do a lot of that, and I feel like that was one of the big things that really changed all of us as people. And I see it now in our kids. I see kind of more of this flexibility and this creativity, I guess, in how they approach things and the way they problem-solve and in their willingness to go with the flow when something changes or it wasn't like what they thought. And I think that is such a valuable life lesson.

Katie: I agree. And our family has adopted from you guys your family motto, which I want you to talk about as we kind of transition into the parenting side of things, the idea that you were made to do hard things, which I love so much. And in fact, long-time podcast listeners have actually heard me mention you and mention that motto a few times already, because we learned it from you guys. And it's so true, it's something we say to our kids quite often. And I know that you and I share a lot of parenting philosophies, especially about raising independent and resilient kind of free-range kids. And so I'd love for you to talk about that for a little while, share a few of your philosophies on this and how you make it work for your family, even in other countries.

Stephanie: Sure, yeah. I love that you guys have adopted that motto, Katie. I think that's so great, because it's been really impactful to our family, and it's so good when we not only try to do that as adults, but then we start bringing our kids in on this idea that we were made to do hard things. We are strong people, and we can push through and we can do things that we didn't think we were capable of. When we bring our kids in on it, it's like they provide this extra challenge, you know. They kind of reflect that back to us, and we'll even find they'll say that back to us when we're having a moment where we're kind of doubting ourselves or maybe we don't wanna push through something hard. They're like, "Hey, come on, mom, you were made to do hard things." And it's really great when you start getting that back from your kids, so.

But as far as free-range parenting goes, yeah, we definitely have a very similar view to you guys, and I was trying to think, you know, before this podcast about what led us to that or what influenced us. And it's not even because we've, you know, studied it a lot. I mean, I've read a couple books. I was influenced by the book "Free-Range Kids" by Lenore Skenazy, is a great read, especially for people who are kind of concerned about the safety of that. But free-range with your kids is really just about giving them enough freedom to allow them to develop their own sense of independence, to develop really good risk analysis, to develop their critical thinking skills and their own common sense. And it's really hard for kids to develop that stuff if we are perpetually watching them and shouting out words of warning and advice. They don't always learn by us telling them those things. They often just learn by doing it, and it's experiencing the natural limitations or by having to find creative solutions in a tricky situation.

So that's something that, maybe it's part of being homeschoolers. I'm not really sure. My husband and I were both definitely raised that way. I mean, we have really strong memories in our childhoods of having a ton of freedom to go and play with our friends in our neighborhood. We'd be gone all day. We'd leave after breakfast. Our parents would say, "Okay, you can come back for lunch or come back at, you know, 5:00 for dinner." And then we were just free to go. We would bike around town. We would go to stores by ourselves. And even my husband used to like play in the woods, or I would go cross-country skiing on the trails behind our house with my friends. And, for us, having had that, it just felt like what we were seeing around us when we became parents was that people felt like they had to really, I don't know. I'm kind of doing this motion

with my hands. What I feel like is that it made, parents felt like they had to make their kids' worlds smaller, they had to limit them somehow, and I feel like that's really sad.

I understand a lot of the concerns that parents have about different things in our culture today, and I think that parents today need to be really savvy and understand what the risks really are. And that requires us doing research and looking into things, and not just believing things that we hear on the internet or not just kind of developing a sense of general fear without looking into whether our fears are really founded, and being knowledgeable about what fears we should really be concerned about. So I think, you know, the internet is a very big concern. I think that there are particular places that we might not want to allow our kids to go, but then I think, within neighborhoods, within our backyards, especially once kids get a little bit older and they begin to have that common sense, I want to allow them as much freedom as possible, within reason, as we consider the risks and we consider that child's ability. And I think that that's a really big key, is looking at your different children.

People get kind of hung up on the ages that a child should be able to do X, Y, and Z, and I think it's a little bit silly, because if you have more than one child, you know that those children do not develop the same. Our children, you know, are all different at the age of 8, at the age of 10, at the age of 12. Like, they show different levels of maturity and of common sense and of ability to get themselves out of a bad situation or, you know, whether they would freeze in that, or whether they're really aware enough to be able to cross roads by themselves, or whether you've seen them enough times that you know that that child doesn't have the awareness yet. So a lot of it comes with being observant parents who are in tune with your own kids and where they're at and then making choices based on that. And when you see your kids show that responsibility and show that care and show that thoughtfulness that they are making good decisions for themselves, then I think you give them as much freedom as you can within what you think they are capable of. That's our goal, is to give them as much freedom as possible based on what they have shown us they're capable of.

Katie: Yeah, we're exactly on the same page with you. In fact, we often tell our kids the reverse of a common saying as a reminder to them. So the common saying is, "With great power comes great responsibility," or I might be saying that backwards, but we tell our kids, "With great responsibility comes great power." When you show us you have great responsibility and that we can trust you and that you have the skills to do these things, we don't have a reason to keep you from doing them. And we hope that you will continually develop these skills and independence. Because truly, our goal is to raise adults, not to raise perpetual children.

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This podcast is brought to you by Ready, Set, Food!, a new company revolutionizing food allergy prevention in children. We all know that this problem is on the rise, and most of us know someone who has a child with food allergies, or have had this experience ourselves. There are many theories for this and certainly many aspects that need to be addressed like gut health and immune support. Ready, Set, Food! is taking the cutting edge research and science and using it in a practical way to help babies and children avoid food allergies in the first place. Here's how. The most up to date studies are showing that carefully calculated early exposure in the right amounts can stop many cases of food allergies. Ready, Set, Food! makes this easy with a simple system that can be added to breastmilk, formula or baby's first foods to give incremental and calculated exposure to the top allergens like peanuts, egg and milk. When used as directed, this can reduce the chance of childhood allergies by up to 80% and it is recommended and overseen by many of the nation's top pediatricians. Learn more about this evidence based approach and how to integrate it if you have a baby at readyssetfood.com/wellnessmama

Katie: I think one thing parents have to be aware of too is I feel like, for many years, until certainly like the last 100, at least, we lived in smaller communities. Like, we were connected globally a little bit, but still, we were most connected to our local area. And we most knew what was going on in our local area, which was great, because then we could actually help if there was a problem in our local area, or that was just the inputs we were getting. And we're wired, as humans, to pay attention to if something's wrong or someone got hurt or if something burned down, because those are things that could be a danger.

So we're wired to pay attention to those. And now, with, you know, 24-hour news and we're completely connected online, we hear about those things everywhere in the world and all of the worst-case scenarios. So it's logical, as parents, it's completely logical that our brains are going to this place of everything is scary and everything is dangerous, that we're wired that way. It's a safety mechanism. But as parents in today's world, we have to kind of take a step back, like you said, and logically evaluate that and realize that, like you said, the risk of our child having something bad happen in our own yard is very small. In fact, when I interviewed an organization that's helping end sex trafficking around the world, they said the exact same thing you did. They said, literally, statistically, it would take 750,000 years for your child to get kidnapped in your front yard, just based on the statistics. It's obviously an exaggeration to put it in that form, but the risk is very small of your child being abducted in your own yard or your own neighborhood, whereas the risk online, with online predators, is much, much higher. So I think you're so right. If we can give them freedom in the actual physical world and give them the ability to learn and to figure things out and to fail, which is truly one of the best ways to learn, but in the physical world, and not give them as much maybe media freedom when they're young until they really develop that responsibility, I think that's such a wise thing.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah, I absolutely agree. You know, one thing I wanted to comment on too is that you asked about our travels, and I think it's really interesting to bring that up, because around the world, we have seen so many examples of cultures where they really do give their kids that freedom and that ability to do things independently so much more than North America. Like, I really feel like I haven't seen anywhere else in the world where kids are kept on quite a short of a leash as they are here. Like when we have been in Europe and Central America and Asia, just so much more freedom. Like when we were in Japan, we were seeing kids as

young as five or six, and they were taking the local commuter train together back and forth between school. I mean, they'd usually be in a little group, they kind of watch out for each other, and I noticed that the adults on the train also watched out for them, but they were taking these trains. They know they were at the station by themselves, taking the trains back and forth, day in and day out.

In Europe, we see kids walking and biking to school all the time. Hardly any parents actually drive them there the way that they do here. The kids are going around town to visit their friends. They're walking to the store, to the bakery. And we just have definitely seen more of a sense of freedom for kids and less of restrictions on what a child should be able to do. They seem to recognize the maturity and the capability of a child maybe earlier than we do, and I think that's a great thing.

Katie: Absolutely, and especially with all the statistics we're seeing, especially in the U.S., about, you know, kids not moving enough and the increasing rates of obesity and health problems in children, and we're keeping kids indoors and we're driving them everywhere. And like you said, in other parts of the world, it's very much not like that, and those countries are often far ahead of us in health outcomes, and that very well could be one of the reasons. And just as an example, I feel like I should mention to the listeners, like when our two families get together, collectively, we have 11 kids, and we truly, like the adults can sit and drink a cup of coffee, and it's relatively quiet. The kids just go play outdoors for hours and hours and hours and hours, and we have to call them in at night, or they're reading books, or they're...

The beauty of it is they learn to be okay with boredom and they learn how to find, not entertainment, but to find material in their own mind or in their own environment, so they don't need constant stimulation from media or from parents to be happy. I think I see that trap so often, especially with, and I fell into it as a mom of my first child, before I had more to kind of teach me, that I thought I was supposed to kind of entertain him or interact with him or play with him all day long. And there was such a freedom actually in finding out that kids need to develop the skills to be able to do that on their own. Because, certainly, as an extreme example, we're not gonna be there when they're adults to protect them from their mistakes or to drive them to their job. But there's a beauty that all of us can learn in learning to sit with silence and to figure out how to be still inside of ourselves and to find activities without needing external stimuli. So I love that you guys are so much on the same page with that.

And I know that something else we share, we're both entrepreneurs and I know that it's important to both of us to raise our kids at least with the skills and the options to be entrepreneurs. We don't, you know, require that of them, of course. But in our family, for instance, our kids, they know and learn about our businesses. They're involved in the ways they can be. But also, since we homeschool, we work on finishing up the majority of the bookwork curriculum by about 13 or 14. So, that will be in a couple of years with our first child, and our idea is to create an entrepreneur incubator with them and help them in the teenage years while they're still at home, try new business ideas, likely fail at a couple, and maybe launch one while they're still here with us, and we can help kind of mentor them along the way so that they have been through that hardest part of an entrepreneur of like failing a few times and realizing it's not fatal. But since I know we share that, can you talk about how you guys incorporate an entrepreneur lifestyle with your kids as well?

Stephanie: Yeah. I mean, I think even just being raised by entrepreneurs and us being willing to continually talk about our work, talk about what we're learning, we talk about our failures with the kids. They know the times when we've had ideas that didn't work. They know the times when we have lost money. And then we also share with them our successes. So we're very open with our kids about, "This is what's going on in our world. Look at the rewards of what we're doing. And yes, sometimes you see us having to work extra because that is what goes along with being an entrepreneur, and sometimes you pour in a lot. It takes a lot of hard work often in the beginning." And so they have seen that work ethic from us, but then they also, you know, they get to experience the rewards when we're able to travel, when we're able to have these extra times of family bonding. So that's kind of the first way.

The second way for us is we are really trying to encourage our kids, like you, to begin working on things while they're at home. It's interesting that you mentioned kind of the incubator idea, because just last night, at dinner, my husband and I went out for a date, and we were talking about, "You know, in their teen years, we'd really love to, like, set aside money for them, and they actually have to be responsible for that money." They would be able to borrow money from us to try out different things, but they'll have to pay it back. There's going to be some requirements for them. Maybe they have to meet weekly with a business mentor or coach, or things like that. But we've kinda just been playing around with how can we kind of further this. You know, with our oldest, we've already brought her into the business that we currently run. She's learning about it, she's working on our team, and that's been a really great experience for her. But she's doing her own things, too. So she is beginning a YouTube channel, and she's learning to plan out her strategy, and she's had to buy her own equipment. We don't buy that for her. We really require her to step up and take ownership of it if it's something that she wants to do.

And then our next oldest, he is 11 and he's got this very much more science-minded brain. He loves invention. Well, my husband is beginning to work on a prototype of sort of a...he can explain it much better than I can, but it's sort of like a cord and a plug system for when you're traveling, to keep everything very neat and tidy and contained. And that's something that we've struggled with as travelers. So you sort of, it's always good to create something out of the need that you've experienced yourself. So he's working on this, but my 11-year-old got really, really excited by the idea. So he said, "Well, why don't you help me do this? Like, why don't we make an agreement, and we're gonna be partners, and we're gonna develop this together." So they began making appointments with different engineers so that they could talk to them about the development of this project. So my son has sat in on every one of those meetings, and he brings his ideas to the table, and he asks really good questions, and he's getting to see the interaction that my husband has with these engineers.

And then, for Christmas, we decided to try to really keep pushing him in this direction or just give him the tools that he needed. So his big Christmas gift was kind of a lower-end 3D printer, because we thought, "Well, if he's really into this, then what if he could learn to do the programming with a 3D printer and he could begin to work on prototypes himself?" And so that's what he and my husband have been working on now for the past week or two. They're playing around, they're learning the program, they're watching tutorials, and now, they're starting to make things. And it's just so fun to watch our kids begin to kind of explore and understand who they are and what they're passionate about and what their skills and their gifts are, and then to see them start running after it while they're still at home. Like, I don't want them to just go off and never have tried it and fail without us around. I want them to be able to test things out and have us to bounce ideas off of and to be able to talk about things with. And hopefully, we can help really set them up for success by starting so young.

Katie: I love that, and then your little ones will see not just you guys but your older ones doing that. So, by the youngest, he'll have so many great examples to learn from and to follow. And I think that's so important too to realize, like, for our kids, like I said, it's not that we require them to be entrepreneurs, just like we're not gonna require them to go to college unless they choose something that they need to go to college for. Our main requirement for them and our goal in raising them is just we want you to do something that improves the world, that makes the world a better place, and we wanna give you the tools to do that. And I love so much these ages our older ones are at, because they get that concept, but their brains are still sponges, like you mentioned with your son. And when they get an idea and they can just, like, delve into it, it's a beautiful thing to see. And I can't wait to see what the next few years hold for both of us with our very creative kids and what they'll come up with.

Stephanie: Me too.

Katie: Also, another thing I wanna speak about a little bit, because, as your friend, I've seen this beautiful transition in you in the last couple of years, and I wanna learn your secrets, is, as a mom and a business owner and a traveler, you obviously have a lot on your plate, as I think most moms do. I've always said I think moms are some of the most powerful people on the planet, and we're also some of the busiest. And I think you have figured out some things, at least in your own life, that have really helped you to make that easier and less stressful. And I've seen just this beautiful transition, and you're so effective and efficient, and also, you seem just like calm. So, what are some tips that you can share with other moms about just general life balance, things we can all learn from you?

Stephanie: That's a good question. Well, I definitely learned the lesson of how to burn myself out early on, because I'm a really ambitious person, and I tend to work myself pretty tirelessly. And you have probably seen me through several of these phases, Katie, where I have gone so hard for so long that I just reached like an absolute point of, you know, adrenal burnout and fatigue and got to the point where I was very nonfunctional and even dealing with some pretty severe depression and anxiety, and it was becoming quite debilitating. And I have really had to learn from that. And so there have been a couple of components of that learning. One of them has just been the physical self-care and learning to really listen to my body to understand what I need to prioritize. Sleep has become huge, huge for me. I did not know for so many years how important the quality of my sleep was. And so, over the last few years, I began listening to podcasts and reading books to understand more about how I can improve the quality of my sleep. And putting all those things into practice that I've learned has made a really, really big difference, because, now, I do feel like the sleep that I'm getting is, it's just serving my body so much better, and it's so much more refreshing for me. And then I can notice when I'm not doing that and I'm like, "Oh, that's a little signal to me. I need to get back to really prioritizing my sleep." So that has been huge.

Also, just making sure that I have time to do the things that make me feel good and feel rested and just feel energetic. And so, some of those things, for me, exercise is really a key. I have to fit exercise into my life, even if it's just 10 minutes in my living room, of like pulling out my kettlebell and my yoga mat and just getting in whatever I can. Or if it's, you know, actually making time and, you know, saying to my husband, "Hey, can we make it work for me to go to the gym for this period of time?" I feel like that's really important for me. So learning to prioritize that and not feeling guilty about it, and even just doing it with my kids. If they come in,

no big deal, then I just, you know, pass them a lighter kettlebell, and we keep going together. And so, adding that in and just caring about my health in general, I mean, you talk about all of this stuff on the podcast all the time, so there are so many nuggets that they could get elsewhere, but really paying attention to what I'm needing, to how I'm staying hydrated, to the nutrients and the supplements that I'm taking at different seasons of life to make sure that I'm adjusting them according to what my body needs. So that self-care piece has been really big.

And then the other thing has been recognizing that I simply cannot do it all. And for so many years, I tried so hard to do it all. I thought that I did not need help around my house. I thought that I did not need to hire extra help for my business. I thought that I did not need any help with homeschooling my kids. I really believed that I could do all of these things myself. And time has just shown me that I can't, and that I thrive and, in fact, my family thrives when I'm willing to accept help, to ask for help, to bring in the different things that I need. And so, you know, for our work, that has meant me looking at what are the most impactful things that I do in my work and focusing my time on those, but then making sure that we have people on our team who can do them and then trusting them to do them. Like, me not stepping back in and pulling them, you know, those tasks back into my grubby little hands, because they don't need to sit with me. They can sit with the really smart, capable people that are on our team and who can do them and who want to take them off of my plate. So that's been a really big one.

And even bringing in help to my house sometimes, that is something I felt a lot of guilt and I think shame over for a long time. But recognizing that I am currently a full-time. In different seasons, I have ranged anywhere from working 20 to 40-plus hours a week while, you know, homeschooling 5 kids. I currently am working more full time, and my husband does more of the homeschooling. But still, it's a lot for us to carry, and so we do bring in a cleaner, usually once a week. And that is huge, because we still have to do the laundry, we still have to do the dishes, we still have to make the meals and buy the groceries. There's so much for us to do still. But to know that deep cleaning is getting done, I no longer feel guilty about that. I really feel like I'm just employing a smart strategy that makes our lives run better. So it's really been about those two things, taking care of myself and learning to allow things to be off of my plate so that I'm not carrying the full load of everything.

Katie: Yeah, such great advice. I think that guilt piece is the toughest thing for moms. It's like one of those things, we hear we should do self-care, we know we should take time. It's the hardest thing to do, because we obviously love our families so much. And I love that you have found that balance, and I hope that everybody listening is able to find that balance in their own life in whatever way works in your family situation and your own life. A couple of questions, I can't believe we're already nearing the end of our time, but a couple of questions I love to ask at the end, and I can't wait to hear your answers are, is there a book or a number of books that have really influenced your life? And if so, what are they and why?

Stephanie: Okay. I have one, and I kind of hate this answer, and I've mentioned it to you before. But the first one I'm just gonna say is "The 4-Hour Workweek" by Tim Ferriss. Actually, it kind of piggybacks a little bit on what we were just talking about with that balance and not doing everything, because my husband and I read his book kind of simultaneously. At the time, we were both in a hard place with our business doing everything ourselves, and also kind of wanting a little bit more adventure in our lives, but not really knowing how to step out and do that. So, although we don't agree with everything in the book, and there are things I don't love,

what it did do for us was help us to analyze what was working in our businesses and in our lives and what wasn't, and to sort of figure out where we needed to put our energy, and what things we could completely eliminate, what things we could delegate, what things we could automate, and just how we could kind of cut back on the time that we are spending. And it also really helped us to assess the risks and the benefits of us making a bold decision, like planning our trip around the world. That was really the thing that sparked it, and us saying, "Well, these are the possible risks, but these are the benefits to our family if we do it. Does it feel worth it?" "Yeah, yeah, it actually does feel worth it." So that really helped us to do that.

Other than that, I mean, I read voraciously, but I would say the other thing that's influenced me has been a lot of the homeschool books that I have read over the years, just different books about different perspectives on homeschooling and on child development. And I could give you a list that you could put in the show notes, Katie, but I feel like, whether you're a homeschooler or not, reading about education, reading about child development is really helpful as a parent. It just helps you to develop a more concrete and more confident perspective on how you want to raise your kids and what you value and what you're gonna prioritize in your family and how to create that sort of family culture or that home environment or learning environment that you want to nurture, you know, the type of kids and, ultimately, adults that you want to raise. So those really impacted me as well.

Katie: I love that. And, yeah, if you can get a list together, I'll make sure they're in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm, for you guys listening. And I'm curious if I've read them too, and if not, I'd love to read them. And then, lastly, if you could just pass on one piece of advice to other moms, what would it be and why?

Stephanie: Well, you know, we've talked a lot about homeschooling, or our worldschooling, and I think maybe that can be frustrating from some moms when they hear that, because not everybody is a homeschooler and not everybody even feels a compulsion to homeschool. They don't even feel like that's what they want for their family. But regardless of whether we keep our kids at home or we have them in public or private education, I think we all just need to make sure that we view our kids' education as our own responsibility, because we have this incredible honor and privilege of helping to shape who our children are going to become. But when we let that responsibility go really out to the schools or out to a religious organization or out to anybody else, and we don't really hold on to it ourselves, we're losing something very precious. And, obviously, like, I believe in home educating for a lot of reasons, but I also believe that you can put your kids in school without giving up the role of teacher in their lives. You still get to have that role.

I mean, parents are the ones who have the ability to create a really rich learning environment in your home, whether that's the type of activities you do together as a family, whether you're taking martial arts together, whether you're reading and talking about books or you're doing projects together. You get to choose who you're going to associate with as a family, choosing, you know, your friends and acquaintances carefully. You get to determine the activities that you're gonna spend your time and money and energy on. You get to assess the role of entertainment in your lives. And, you know, you get to just nurture your family culture. So, for us, we're trying to choose to nurture a creative, adventurous, hardworking, and really intentional family culture. And I just feel like every parent has that ability and that right and that responsibility regardless, and nobody can take that away from you. So I think if we can just really hold on to the fact that we are our child's primary teacher, that's so important.

Katie: Beautiful. I love it. I think that's a perfect place to end. And I also know firsthand just how busy you are, so thank you so much for your time and for sharing today. This has been a blast, and I think it's gonna be really impactful for a lot of moms, even though it's a deviation from just a pure health topic. I think travel and education of children and parenting are very valid topics, and I love that you shared your perspective, so thank you.

Stephanie: Thank you so much for having me, Katie. It really was great to talk to you about these. Obviously, I get pretty passionate about these once I get going, and I agree they're important topics. So thank you so much for having me on.

Katie: And thank you to all of you for sharing your most valuable asset of your time with us today. We don't take that lightly, and we're so grateful you joined us. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of "The Wellness Mama Podcast."

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