

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]

simple answers for healthier families

Episode 101: Critical Thinking in a Social Media
World (what you didn't learn in history class)

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

Katie: This podcast is brought to you by Four Sigmatic. If you follow me on Instagram, you've probably seen me mention them because I have been using and loving and Instagramming their products for years. They have an amazing instant mushroom coffee. Hear me out before you think it's weird. I know, mushroom coffee doesn't sound good. It's not only the best instant coffee I've ever tried, it's also pretty high up on the list of best coffee I've tried. It's cheaper than coffee shop coffee and it's so convenient because it's so portable and it tastes so much better. But it isn't just ordinary coffee. It has super food mushrooms like Lion's Mane, Cordyceps, and Chaga mushrooms. And these mushrooms have some big health benefits, and especially immune benefits. I personally, especially love them for the energy and the mental clarity without the jitters from traditional coffee. And did I mention how good it tastes? So I always take these instant coffee packets with me when I travel, and I also always drink it at home these days now that they have a big tin that lasts about a month so I don't have to open a little packet every day.

Some friends of ours recently traveled for three months carrying only the backpacks on their backs, and they brought an entire three months supply of this instant coffee in their bag that had limited space. In other words, this coffee beat out a pair of jeans for how important it was to make it in the bag. It's that good. And, of course, if you aren't a caffeine person, they also have a variety of mushroom tea and other products that don't have the coffee so you can get the benefits without the caffeine. And I love them so much that I reached out and they agreed to give a discount to my listeners. So go to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and use the code "WELLNESSMAMA" to get 10% off. That's Four Sigmatic, F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/wellnessmama.

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Katie: Welcome to the Healthy Moms podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and I am so excited about today's guest. Someone I have been a fan of for a really long time and I'm excited to finally talk to. Tom Woods is a senior fellow at the Mises Institute, he hosts of The Tom Woods podcast and he has degrees from both Harvard and Columbia. He is a guest on CMBC, MSNBC, Fox News, Fox Business Network, C-SPAN as well as many other television and radio outlets. He's written 12 books including most recently, "Real Dissent, A Libertarian Sets Fire to the Index Card of Allowable Opinion" as well as several others. And he also has, the Happy Earner, which is an online entrepreneurship website, and he is an incredible resource. I've read a lot of his books and I'm really excited to jump in. So, Tom:, welcome. Thank you so much for being here.

Tom: My pleasure, Katie.

Katie: Awesome. So, Winston Churchill famously said that, "Those who do not understand history, are doomed to repeat it." And as a parent and a long time reader of your work, I'm excited to really delve into that today and talk about why history and economics are more important than ever today in a social media world. And as a homeschooling parent, I know that you have a strong mission to help those teach these topics to children.

I've used a lot of your courses with my own children, and so I know this topic is a little bit of a deviation from my normal, just strictly kind of health focus, but I think it's equally important. So I'm excited to jump in with my readers. To start, you have a pretty impressive list of degrees and a really impressive bio. So can you take us through your journey and especially how you went from being a professor to now being an entrepreneur?

Tom: I graduated with my...I got a Ph.D. in history from Columbia in early 2000. It that was officially awarded to me. And I did teach for a while and I enjoyed doing it. But as time went on, I realized, for one thing, sometimes people in your class no matter how funny and entertaining and informative you are, just are there marking time. Their parents are forcing them to be there, last place in the world they wanna be is sitting in your classroom, no matter what you do for them, it just does not matter. And I began to realize I could have a much, much larger audience with much less aggravation, by making videos and doing and engaging in online activities and creating courses online. I now have an audience of tens of thousands that listen to me every single day, and there are sometimes different people every day. They pick and choose what episodes they wanna listen to of my podcast, so I have a huge audience, I have multiple six figures on social media when you put them all together, and I have a lot of people on my e-mail list. I am reaching vastly more people and having a much more impact because I'm reaching people who actually want to learn. They're not on my email list because Mom and Dad told them to be, they are on it because they get free stuff from me, they learn from me, and they see the value in what I'm doing. And so I don't, in any way say, "Ah, if only I could be back in the academic bureaucracy teaching 35 kids, 29 of whom, you know, would prefer jumping off a cliff to being in there." I don't long for that. I don't envy people in that situation. Now, people who are good at that and who like being there, that's great for them. But when I look at what I've been able to accomplish outside of academia, it's not even a contest.

So, after about 2010, that's when I really, really went out on my own and I realized that with the internet, I have the ability to create stuff for myself, to create a career, to create content, to build an audience, to build a following, and frankly to build an audience and a following that can also be monetized. Because although I do give a lot of stuff away, I've done over 900 free podcast episodes and multiple free e-books and many, many free videos, I do after all have a family to support, and I can do that fairly comfortably because I'm taking full advantage of all the resources that are available to me online. And in fact, that has actually become one of my side interests is now I teach people how they can do this, how you can...because I don't have to work nine to five, I can work anytime I want and I can take a day off without any real problem. I have a very flexible lifestyle and I know there are a lot of people who would like to have that. So I wrote an e-book on exactly how I do it. So one of my side interests has become precisely this, how in this amazing age we live in, you can instead of letting this pass you by, you can grab these opportunities. So I have a page where you can get my e-book which is, it's called 5 Paths to an Online Income and it goes through five different things that I do, and step by step how I do them every single day, and that's at pathstoincome.com.

Katie: That's awesome. I'll make sure that I have a link to that for anybody listening. And I love that that's your story and that you've been able to reach such a wide audience and especially that you kind of...it seems like you've created a really passionate community with an interest in economics and history, which I feel like are some of those subjects that a lot of times you hear kid like, "Oh, history." And to me, they're some of the most fascinating. But I love that you have this really passionate and engaged community that's excited about these topics again because I think, in today's world, those are actually really important subjects that people often forget about. So can you talk about why you got into history and economics, to begin with, and also why these topics are still so important in today's world for children to learn?

Tom: Well, I got interested in it because I feel like if you...if you study real economics and you understand it, you really have an understanding of how the world works. And an example, of a mentor of mine, has often used to be, think of something as simple as a ham sandwich. We don't even give another thought to a ham

sandwich but yet that ham sandwich is something of a miracle, because in order to create that ham sandwich what you need to do? You need to have a farmer raising wheat, he had to buy the land and the implements, you needed pigs and the pigs had to be on a farm, and then the pigs had to be sold to a slaughterhouse, a slaughterhouse had to take the meat to a deli which needed refrigeration, which needed transportation equipment, which meant you needed tires, which meant you need to create rubber, which means you needed gasoline to get it over there, you needed to create tables for the restaurant. All these sorts of things have to go into making you that little ham sandwich. And you would think given the immense complexity of this network of things. I mean, just think of the entire start to finish process of making the rubber for the tires that gets the ham to the store, it's huge. And then interlock that with all these other processes, it's almost miraculous that anything happens and yet this all happens with no one person in charge. There is no ham sandwich tsar barking out orders to people how to... "Okay, you better go and start mining steel for the refrigerators and you better..." There's no need for that because it happens spontaneously and with no central direction.

It happens because in a free economy, price signals or prices, help entrepreneurs figure out where they fit in in the economy, and what they should...what's best for them to do. And so, you get the ham sandwich just through the uncoerced cooperation of all these different people in all these different fields. If that's interesting to you, then you'll love economics. If you don't find that remarkable then it's not really for you. But I find that remarkable because it helps to understand how the world works.

And then history, well, history I became interested in it if you can believe this because on the college campus that I found...where I found myself which was Harvard, there was a literal communist newspaper being sold outside the dining hall every night when I was a freshman. And I'm not saying they were a little bit on the left and I'm just insulting them by calling them communists, they were actually communists. And they were making all kinds of outlandish claims about life in the U.S. and about the Russian Revolution and with the great heroes of the Russian Revolution. And I just had to go back and read some history because I had to...I had to smack these guys down how could they believe such preposterous nonsense? And the more I read history so that I could debate these crazies at the dining hall, the more I thought, "Wait a minute, maybe I wanna do this." So it's a little bit odd that the communists actually directed me into history. Now, in terms of why kids should understand it, well, it's really the same answer of why any American, any citizen anywhere should understand it because there are questions that arise every day, that you really cannot reckon with if you don't have a good historical background. It's not simply that we have to look to the lessons of history and not repeat them because a lot of times history is not super clear, history is a bit ambiguous at times. But, there is nevertheless, a lot of valuable, valuable information to be mined from history. For example, today there are a lot of people who'd think maybe the U.S. military could bring feminism to Afghanistan and could completely redo their entire political culture there. And they say, "Well, look it worked after World War II. Japan had a very militaristic culture and then we went in there and now look what we have? This wonderful prosperous Japan. So look, so we could do that for any country."

Well, how could you evaluate that claim? Unless you know history. Unless you can go back and look at the specifics of what exactly did happen in Japan and is that really comparable to Afghanistan? How would you be able to know if you're being snookered or not if you don't know the history? Or we often hear, especially in the past several years, arguments that the president doesn't have the right to, in the case of Barack Obama, bomb Libya. Or the in the case of Donald Trump, bomb Syria, without getting congressional approval. And they say, "Look, it says in the Constitution that that it's Congress that declares war." But then on the other side, people can say, "But the Constitution also says the president is the commander in chief of the armed forces." So it sounds like both sides have an argument. Well, how can you adjudicate that dispute if you don't know history? If you don't know the Constitution, what it was intended to mean, what the early practice of the early American presidents was with regard to the use of military force? So you see, these sorts of questions come

up in current events all the time. And if you don't have a historical background, then you're not really in a position to come up with a sensible answer.

Katie: I definitely agree. And I love in your books especially like you really delve deeper into a lot of the things that I thought I knew, and then I...like get a different understanding and a deeper understanding through your writing. And you mentioned that in order to understand current problems, you have to understand the lens at which we see them through history and economics. What do you think are some of these big problems we and our children are gonna wrestle with over the next few decades?

Tom: Well, I would say the key one is that the Federal Government has probably overpromised what it can deliver when it comes to things like, a lot of people think Social Security. And yes, that's gonna have some problems. But the big budget buster is Medicare. When you look at how much the U.S. government is going...I beg your pardon, U.S. economy is gonna produce over the next say 20, 40, 60 years, and then you look at what's been promised to people, what people have been led to expect in terms of Medicare payments, and it vastly outpaces what the U.S. economy will be able to cope with. I mean, we're talking hundreds of trillions of dollars that are gonna have to...we are gonna have to come up with somehow and that's rather a tall order. So I would say coping with that, coping with the excess promises. Excess promises are a problem that democracies tend to run into because what will happen is, a lot of politicians in democracies will realize that it's unpopular to raise taxes. So what they'll instead do is make promises that have to be paid for by future generations of taxpayers. And by that time, those politicians will be safely retired. So an example of this would be a lot of the public sector pensions in a number of the American states. That's a nice way to get the people in those industries to vote for you.

You get the teachers to vote for you because of the pensions and the other public sector workers to vote for you because of the pensions, and it seems painless because there's no payment on the pensions right now, but there will be 20, 30 years from now. And at that point, we see there are a number of states where there is a real, real danger of more or less insolvency because of the overwhelming promises made on the end when it comes to pension. So this is a problem that, as I say, arises, in democracies we have people trying to maximize their vote total and minimize the pain...the electoral pain they suffer. Well, how do you do that? You try to keep taxes low and you try to keep promises high. Well, eventually what will happen is you can't keep the promises, so the promises are gonna have to retreat and the taxes are gonna have to come up. And I would say that's, in terms of the economy, that's the big, big issue is the bill coming due on a lot of this that our kids and we ourselves are gonna have to face.

Katie: I agree. What do you think? Is there any solution to that? I know it's so easy to just think like, "Obviously, we wanna take care of people." And I know a lot of people that that's where their heart is coming from of we should take your people with health care and with Medicare and all these things. But is there a solution that actually doesn't hurt the economy? Or how do you...what's your opinion on that?

Tom: Well, there are... I have a book called Rollback, and toward the end, I do try to give some reasonable options to see what can be done here. it may be a case where it's just gone so far that there is no way that it can be undone without some pain being experienced by a lot of people. I think that's basically what we face. Like today for example, if you look at the amounts of money that younger people pay into these programs, and then you compare it to the amount they're gonna get back, they are net losers on all of them. They are net losers and that's a...that's a fairness issue if you ask me. But in terms of how to get out of it, there are some policy mechanisms that I talk about in that book, Rollback, that might be able to help. There's been one proposal that I've heard floated would be... What if we told people that once you hit age 65, we'll give you a choice. If you opt out of receiving benefits from, let's say Social Security and Medicare, you could live the rest of your life completely tax-free. And so you won't have these... because there are huge penalties on people

when they keep working after 65. We would get rid of the estate taxes, we'd get rid of...I mean every tax you can think of. We get rid of those taxes so that person, yeah, you can use that money to help support yourself.

So in other words, there would be some people who might be willing to take that deal and therefore, they'd be fewer people we'd to cover. We have to think creatively to some degree, because just simply putting our fingers in our ears and saying, you know, or if I may borrow from the Simpsons. Homer Simpson is trying to take his nuclear physics exam, he's woefully unprepared and his entire plan is, "Well, on the day of the exam, I'll hide under some coats and hope that somehow everything works out." So far that's been the plan. So anything that you propose to try to work on it is gonna sound harsh to some people but it's only harsh because you can't just hide under some coats.

Katie: Yeah, I like that proposal. I hadn't heard that specifically, but that's a great idea to offer people an incentive to not take the retirement stuff and also to reduce taxes. I think that would be really appealing to a lot of people. What other things do you see as far as that would help the economy especially, are there things that can be done on a local or state scale as well as a national scale like that?

Tom: Well, of course, the states should be doing what they can to foster voluntary replacements for a lot of these programs, that we just naturally assume only the government can do. And that's been a big part of the problem is that people have... A lot of government, at times government solutions just rob us of our natural creativity and curiosity about how the world works. So we see government doing something for a long time so we think that's the only way it can work. So, if government were producing all the shoes, we would be absolutely convinced that everyone would be barefoot if it weren't for government. So for example, we hear about Arts funding and, oh, gosh were we lectured to this year about funding for the arts and what a bunch of barbarians that we are if we don't favor government funding of the arts. Well, what was completely left out of that is that government funding of the arts is somewhere in the neighborhood of about \$150 million a year which sounds like a lot until you realize that private contributions to the arts are in the billions of dollars every year.

Well, that rather relevant fact was completely left out of the discussion. And moreover, I personally, am not convinced that government is really qualified to find out who the best artists are, what they tend to do is be pretty good at figuring out who are the people who are the best at filling out grant applications, but those are not always the best artists. So art becomes politicized in that way. I could give other examples too of areas of life where we're just convinced that there can't be a non-government solution. So for example, I used to live in Kansas, heaven help me, and the governor there was saying, "We just don't have the money, so we're gonna have to cut back yes indeed on the arts." And oh my goodness, it was just up in arms. But pretty much private people came up and filled in the gap because we...We got a letter in the mail from the Colombian theater in Oswego Kansas. And they were saying, "Because of budget cuts, our theater is gonna lose \$5,000." Now, can you believe this is a theater that seats hundreds of people. So you're talking about this would be what? An extra 15 bucks per person for the entire year? And they honestly had lost their creativity to the point where they could not imagine where they would come up with that money.

One bank that they would approach about being a sponsor would come up with that money. One individual could come up with 10 times that money if you just asked. But I mean, \$5,000 is a drop in the bucket compared to these budgets and everybody is just completely clueless as to what to do. So, I would start with reminding people, "You are not helpless boobs. You actually can accomplish great things without a gun being put in your ribs, without being forced to do it." But what I'd like to see is more cases of states like New Hampshire, where you have no state income tax and no state sales tax, and then you see how much economic activity you get in your state. And I guarantee you, you will see a lot of people moving into these states and that will be a helpful lesson for the remainder.

Katie: Yeah, I definitely agree. And I think you brought up a great point about like thinking critically and not just assuming that the government is the only answer for this. And I know there's been a lot in the news recently about fake news and about, you know, people just kind of forming opinions from headlines and apparently on social media, this is perceived as a really big problem. But I think maybe the answer is not that social media needs to vet what we are being shown, but also that we all are able to think more critically. So, how would you encourage people to go about thinking more critically? Or what are some ways that they can do that in this kind of like fake news culture that we're in?

Tom: Yeah, well, I would first of all dispense in large part with this whole way of thinking. That the idea that we have these respectable mainstream news organizations on the one hand, and raving lunatics on the other, the mainstream news organizations have been wrong as wrong can be on Kate, major issue after major issue. And so, I frankly wouldn't...I wouldn't trust CNN as far as I can throw it. And you're talking to somebody who has four Ivy League degrees. So I have the establishment credentials but I sure don't trust the establishment news. So, I would say, to some degree, you have to be in a position where you can make your own judgment, you know, you have to be informed enough from your own studies to be able to say, "Nope, what they're telling me is not so..." In fact, oddly enough, one way to get good information like in the months leading up to the war in Iraq for example, one of the best ways to get really reliable information was to leave behind the New York Times altogether which as usual, was just a propaganda publication the entire time, was to read the international press if you can believe that. You had to go out of the U.S. read even the British press which is only marginally better but at least you get some stories that we don't read here. But, you know, I would go to a number of sites that would curate the news from around the world and then I would say, "All right, this is what everybody else in the world is reading about, and yet I am not reading about it in the New York Times." So, unfortunately, it means to some degree you're a bit on your own.

Katie: Yeah, definitely. In fact, I often think about... I originally went to school for journalism, that's what my original degree was in and I had this kind of big idea that I was gonna help, you know, spread like actual truth and get to the bottom of things and in one of my first freshman journalism classes, I remember I said something in class and the teacher basically like correcting me was like, "There is no objective media. You're gonna be working for whoever's paying you, and they have an agenda." And it like definitely disillusioned me in that first year of journalism school. Like my whole idea of trying to help solve these problems was not gonna happen from the journalism side.

Tom: Right, right, right. So...But on the other hand, the nice thing about how we live today is that this media monopoly is being broken. And that's why they're screaming at the top of their lungs, "Fake News. This is why you still need us. You can't trust these other people who are trying to give you the news. Why? We're the professionals," But they have been molding opinion, they claim they're reporting the news, but they have been molding opinion in a particular way for decades and decades, and they are seeing this opinion-molding function, being taken away from them, and they're terrified by it and so we get this fake news smear. So I frankly, am glad about it because it shows that these outlets are in their death throes and it couldn't happen to a better bunch of people if you ask me.

Katie: Exactly. So that actually brings me to another point I'd I love to really talk about, and that's higher education because you obviously have a lot of advanced degrees and have been through the education system quite a bit, and I have my own views on this. But I'm curious, what is your take right now currently on with our social atmosphere and where we are as a country on higher education? And if it's even financially makes sense for a lot of kids coming out of high school. I know a lot of parents have kids in that age range and are gonna have to make that decision soon. So where do you stand on that?

Tom: And the kids are gonna be subjected to violent thugs who wanna make sure that only one perspective is reflected on the campus. It's unbelievable what's happening now, people are being terrorized for being dissidents. In the old days, these people were the dissidents. Now that they have gained the ascendancy on the campuses, they're gonna make sure no dissent is allowed. So you have to factor in that that's how...that's what your child is going to be exposed to. And you're gonna be charged probably in the six figures in total for that privilege if that's what we wanna call it. So, I think at this point, we have to recognize that things are not how they were when I graduated from college in 1994, you could have a degree in anything, it didn't matter. It was a very prosperous economy and it was so much so you could take a very conventional approach. Get a degree in whatever, graduate, get a good job. Well, that formula is breaking down. You're going to have to think a little bit more creatively than that.

And I've never been one of these people to say, "Don't go to college, it's a total waste of your time." It's not a waste of your time, particularly if you're in the hard sciences, or you have to get particular training in a particular sort of subject and you couldn't do this on your own. Definitely, that's a way to go, go to college. Try to do it as inexpensively as possible. But beyond that, we're seeing very interesting other possibilities popping up. Because basically, what high school and college teach you to do is to get a piece of paper and then sit by the phone waiting for somebody who needs you, and I find that it's incredibly passive. Why are we teaching kids that? You get your degree and just sit by the phone, you send out some resumes and you sit by the phone. That's the only way you can think to integrate yourself into the economy is just sitting by the phone? That's much too passive if you ask me.

So I would much rather... I'd like to see high schools and colleges teach people practical things about, how do you position yourself in the internet age? How do you create a profitable YouTube channel? How do you build an audience? How do you direct traffic to an offer? In other words, practical things, these kids don't know the first thing about. None of this is being taught to them. I'd like to see that taught to them, or at the very least, they can learn on their own. There is a great program that I've promoted a number of times called Praxis where the student is given...Well, it's often a substitute for college. You get an opportunity to be an apprentice, more or less, at a startup company and you get to see how it works from the inside and at the end of your apprenticeship, I mean this is when you're just supposed to be entering college you do this instead. At the end of your year, you are guaranteed a job with that company at a starting salary of at least \$40,000. And their average starting salary that they've got for their graduates is actually \$55,000. So you're 19 years old earning \$55,000 a year. You'll be able to earn that for three years, you could earn it indefinitely, but you'll be earning it for the three years that your peers will still be in college. So while they're going into debt 55 grand a year for three years, you're earning 55 grand a year for three years plus getting three years' experience.

And you know then if you do want to move somewhere else, and let's say you do want to go the traditional route and just apply for a job and put your resume in a pile of other resumes, your resume is going to stand out. Wait a minute, wait, "This person has been in the industry since age 19 and bucked the trend? And did things differently from his peers?" That will get the attention much, of an employer, much more than one of these convoluted mission statements about how, "I want to bring about cooperation among my fellow workers to maximize productivity." That's going right in the trash. But if you're different from everybody else, you will get noticed.

Katie: Yeah, I definitely agree. I tell our kids all the time that I think that some of the biggest skills that they can focus on are being like rapid learning, being able to learn new skills quickly and to identify those trends and also keeping their creativity. And I've taken some heat among extended family members of ours for saying that I'm not gonna encourage my kids to go to college, or definitely not required it, especially if they're not looking at a field where for instance, medicine obviously or law you need a degree. But if it's not one of those fields, my husband and I made the decision a couple years ago that instead of kind of pushing them towards

college, we're gonna offer that as an option but also kind of create what we're calling like our family incubator or fellowship, where when they're in their teenage years, since we homeschool, we're gonna take special time to teach them things like you just said like entrepreneurship and these technical skills. They're already doing things like codecademy and learning computer literacy. But basically, just giving them an environment where they can start to test out entrepreneurial ideas and with the focus in our family is always that your core has to be helping people in some way.

So, letting them take that and try to develop it into a business idea while they're still young and still in our care, and we can kind of help them along the way, so that if college isn't the best option for them, they've got a viable alternative. So, it's cool to hear you say that as well. Also like you, I'm not against college in anyway, I just see a lot of people coming out with a lot more debt than they're ever gonna be able to pay off and a lot more headaches than they thought they were getting.

Tom: Yeah, couldn't agree more.

Katie: This podcast is brought to you by Four Sigmatic. If you follow me on Instagram, you've probably seen me mention them because I have been using and loving and Instagramming their products for years. They have an amazing instant mushroom coffee. Hear me out before you think it's weird. I know, mushroom coffee doesn't sound good. It's not only the best instant coffee I've ever tried, it's also pretty high up on the list of best coffee I've tried. It's cheaper than coffee shop coffee and it's so convenient because it's so portable and it tastes so much better. But it isn't just ordinary coffee. It has super food mushrooms like Lion's Mane, Cordyceps, and Chaga mushrooms. And these mushrooms have some big health benefits, and especially immune benefits. I personally, especially love them for the energy and the mental clarity without the jitters from traditional coffee. And did I mention how good it tastes? So I always take these instant coffee packets with me when I travel, and I also always drink it at home these days now that they have a big tin that lasts about a month so I don't have to open a little packet every day.

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Katie: Yeah. So I love that now you are a successful entrepreneur as well, and you're on this mission to help others learn to love history and economics. So, one of the resources of yours that I use so much is Liberty Classroom, and we use this with our kids for homeschool but I also know parents who don't homeschool who

still use it both for themselves and their kids. So can you talk through what is Liberty Classroom and who can use it?

Tom: I got frustrated at the fact that having gone through fairly elite traditional education, I did learn a lot, I won't deny that but that a lot was left out or presented in a very conventional way that I thought was unhelpful, that left out important perspectives. But obviously, there's nothing I can do about the faculties of Harvard and Yale or any of these other places. So, all I could do instead I thought, was create my own thing because the internet allows me to do that. I can create my own thing. I can go over the heads of everybody else. I can create my own online instructional site that will teach...basically, our tagline is "The history and economics they didn't teach you", or I sometimes say, "This is the antidote to educational malpractice." A lot of us have been victims of educational malpractice. We got a very, very pro-establishment version of history as if there's no other way of looking at events, or important episodes are left out or distorted. So I thought, "Well, what's the harm? Let's give people another perspective."

And I realized that people like my videos on subjects like history and economics and they feel like I'm good at explaining things, and that I'm giving them a lot of stuff they didn't get when they were in school, and people appreciate that. So I thought, "Well, you know what, I'll do it systematically, I'll create a whole site." We now have almost 20 courses on history and economics that are very interesting, that can be consumed while you're on the go, you can listen to them as audio files, you could watch them if you prefer as video. And it's stuff where you're gonna say, "Wow, I was never taught this but man, I'm addicted, I got to learn more." So that's at libertyclassroom.com. So some people do use that, have used that's successfully in a homeschool setting. I have also been involved in a... But although my main thought with that was that it would be mostly for adult enrichment. That adults who say, "You know, man, I really did not get a particularly good education, or I know a lot of my education was kind of politically correct sanitizing, and I'd rather just learn the unvarnished truth." And we get mostly that. But I do have...I have worked very, very hard on a full blown K-12 Curriculum. I've made hundreds of videos for that is self-taught so it takes literally...I would say 90% of the labor off the shoulders of the parents. So you don't have to be running around like a chicken with your head cut off anymore, and that's the Ron Paul Curriculum, and I have a special page for that with some nice bonuses at ronpaulhomeschool.com.

So if any people listening are homeschoolers and you feel like, "My house is always a mess, I'm always an emotional wreck, I have to pretend to my friends that everything's fine because they all think I'm crazy for homeschooling, so I have to put a happy face on it but it's really, really overwhelming me," You can get your students exactly the same, if not a much better education, with much, much less exertion on your part. So it's definitely worth checking out ronpaulhomeschool.com.

Katie: Yeah, I'll echo that. We use that extensively as well. And I love especially with the older kids I can kind of set them up with it on the computer or the iPad and they can learn at their own pace and I found they actually love a lot of the subjects so much that they'll kind of take one and run with it even if it's like above and beyond what the actual curriculum says for them. Because it really is a fascinating thing and I find myself watching along as well with them, it's really interesting.

Tom: Yeah, I'm very, very pleased with it. My kids were, at one time, going to a truly outstanding private school, and now we've moved somewhere where that option unfortunately no longer exists, so we're gonna be pursuing this ourselves. But they have such great natural curiosity this will be a great fit for them.

Katie: I definitely agree. So can you just give a little bit more background on both Liberty Classroom and the Ron Paul Curriculum and what are some of the subjects people will see in there, especially some of your favorites?

Tom: Well, at Liberty Classroom I started taking requests from people. I said what, you know, we've got Western Civilization and U.S. History and the Constitution and economics...In fact, we took the most popular economics textbook in America and we did a whole course critiquing every single chapter, chapter by chapter, that's never been done before. So there's a lot of fun stuff. And then I asked, "Well, what would you guys like as a course?" I could not believe how many people said, "We want a course on Logic." I thought, "What is wrong with you people? But all right, if that's what you want, I'll get it for you." So I got a guy, a wonderful guy, professor in Ireland who was the head of the Department of Philosophy at University College, Dublin. He's a friend of mine, he's been teaching Logic for 30 years. He did our logic course for us, it's just great.

Now with the Ron Paul Curriculum which is a K-12 thing, what I like about that is it's not the conventional, you know, I mean obviously there are a lot of conventional subjects, you know, the sciences are in there, and math is in there, and literature is in there, and so on. But beyond that, there are courses on... Could you imagine how valuable it would be for your teenager to take a course on personal finance for teens? I mean all Americans could stand to take a course like that. Or to take business courses in high school where you learn how to start a small business, how to write effective advertising copy, which is a very, very lucrative skill by the way. If you freelance at that, you can make a fortune if you're good at it. Or we teach them how to prosper in this age of the internet.

So, how to start a YouTube channel, how to start a blog, how to be an effective public speaker, this is not what you get in a typical high school curriculum and yet on top of that, we include all the stuff that you would get in a typical high school curriculum except much more awesome, much more reliable, and much more engaging. So I...you really, I know a lot of times we get attached to things, we get in a routine maybe you have a real attachment to your Homeschool Curriculum, at least check out ronpaulhomeschool.com because you're gonna like the content, and you're gonna like the fact that it's relatively labor non-intensive on the parents.

Katie: Yeah, that part is really nice for sure. So as a parent yourself, what are some of the ways you are preparing your own kids for adulthood and if they become entrepreneurs, or for life in general. What are some of the ways that you do that?

Tom: Well, frankly, I show them what I am doing. And I say, "There's no reason you guys can't do this and even if you wanna..." You know, they wanna have a different career from me obviously there's no problem with that and they all will. But they can always have a fallback. There are there are ways to generate online income streams that are not that difficult, and I'm showing them exactly what I do and I say, "Now look, I put this in place and now I can be walking down the street and an affiliate commission comes into my PayPal account." I show it to them while we're walking. They say, "Oh, about this? Look at that." Because I want them to think about, "Hey, that be kind of neat. How's he doing that?" I wanna wet their appetites for it. So they watch me, I have five kids they're all girls, and they do have an entrepreneurial streak. But mainly, it's just through having them observe what I do as opposed to sitting them down, and giving them lessons, or having them read things. I will say I've had my nearly 14-year-old read a couple of books on entrepreneurship, but I'm not so sure about reading books on entrepreneurship, I think it's just something you gotta go out there and do.

Katie: I agree. It's a very hands-on thing and I know it's not the intended purpose, but I know actually several adults have done certain aspects of the Ron Paul Curriculum especially the business and entrepreneurship side for that exact reason. Because I think, like we were talking earlier with economics or history, we kind of get in this idea, this rut that this is the only solution. And for a lot of people, they think like a traditional job and a security of that is the only solution. And you and I are both entrepreneurs and I'd encourage them to like, like you said before, change that situation and learn because I think right now we're in such an incredible era of entrepreneurship and especially in the online world. And there are things like Liberty Classroom and Ron Paul

Curriculum that can teach that even if you're an adult. So I know it's made for kids, but I know some adults who have used it for that as well.

Tom: Right, exactly. And in fact, the courses that I did for the high school, for the Ron Paul Curriculum, there is no way any adult taking those courses would feel talked down to. That is really, I mean that is that's stuff like...I know there are a lot of people who think, "I hope if I... I'm never in a conversation where somebody starts talking about the Renaissance or Renaissance art or something because I'm gonna look like an idiot because I don't know anything about any of that stuff." You know, all those things where you feel like, "I hope nobody discovers my secret that I don't know anything about X, Y or Z." X, Y, or Z are all covered in my Ron Paul Curriculum, Western Civilization courses, I promise. So plenty of adults have taken them and I've gotten great feedback from them. I worked extremely hard on them because I thought, "If I am gonna do this, I want them to be the best they can possibly be."

Katie: Yeah. I definitely love and, like I said, I'll make sure we include links to them as well. Also, I'd like to circle back. So I mentioned in your bio that you are a member of the Mises Institute, and which teaches Austrian economics. So for people who are not familiar, can we go a little bit into Austrian Economics and what that is, and what that means and how it differs?

Tom: It has nothing to do with the country of Austria per se. People hear Austrian Economics they think, "Well Austria is a small European country, why would I care?" It has nothing to do with that, it's just the name. And it's not a physical school, it's just a school of thought, it's a way of thinking, like the Chicago School. Although, that is actually named after the University of Chicago. But it's a way of thinking about economics. And if I had to give you the short, more or less layman's definition, I would say something like this. These days economics as taught in, you know, a typical course is so heavily mathematical that it's almost inaccessible for the average person. And in fact, even other economists are not interested in reading what their peers are writing anymore. If you look at the American Economic Review, they actually did a survey a number of years ago. How many people read the typical article in the American Economic Review? Answer, two and a half. They couldn't even get it up to three. They got a two people plus a half a person reading one of their articles. Something's wrong here. Now, the Austrian School which is the oldest continuously existing school of thought in economics is of the opinion that economics is not fundamentally a mathematical science because you don't...obviously, you wouldn't wanna study human beings the same way you would study inanimate projectiles.

Human beings have free will, there are no mathematical constants with human beings. So you don't try to force the square peg of human beings with free will into the round hole of inanimate objects. They are different things so they should be studied in different ways. So the Austrian School is much, much less heavily mathematical, it's much more based on just verbal reasoning just think through. If we do X, then Y will follow. And one of the, just one of the areas that the Austrian School has really excelled in, is trying to figure out why does the economy seem to go up and down so much? Like we're all doing great, then we're not doing great. Then we're all doing great, then we're not doing great. Why should that be? And one of their economists F. A. Hayek actually won the Nobel Prize for his answer to this question. And the long and the short of it is, this is not a natural thing. The Marxist say, "Well, that's just the natural feature of capitalism. It's gonna go up and down, up and down, can't help it, got to take the good with the bad." But the Austrians are saying, "That's not natural." That to the contrary, this is actually caused by intervening in the economy. That basically, what you have and I don't wanna get into the technical details, but what you have is in our modern case, for instance, you have central banks like the Federal Reserve System. And the Federal Reserve has different ways it can use to push interest rates lower.

And a lot of people think, "Oh, great. I want lower interest rates." Well, that's true but you would also want to have lower car prices, lower milk prices, lower bread prices, lower everything, right? We'd always want

everything to be lower. But if the government just artificially pushed those prices down, we know that the consequences would not be good. So why are interest rates any different? When you push them artificially low, you get entrepreneurs making decisions they wouldn't have made otherwise. And these are decisions that the economy is trying to tell us, "Don't make these decisions." But every time the economy tries to give us red lights, "Don't do this, don't do this, you're gonna pump up a housing bubble. Don't do this." The Federal Reserve pushes those interest rates lower and it sends a green light to everybody. So it gets the wrong decisions being made, it gets the economy worked up into a configuration that has to come unwound. And so you wind up with what looks like prosperity but it's really a fake prosperity, a lot of it. It's just the Fed pushing interest rates lower and it makes us feel rich for a while.

But eventually, the economy corrects itself and then we demand to know what went wrong. And we try to solve it by more of what caused it the first place. So it was really the Austrian economists who distinguished themselves in the housing bust, because they had a real story of what went wrong. They were the ones who were saying for years, "There's something wrong with the housing market, this whole thing is insane. This is a house of cards. This is built on sand, it's government policy and the Fed that are leading to this. It's not speculators in the Senate, these people are playing bit parts of the overall drama. If there weren't all this credit being created by the Fed, there wouldn't be all this money sloshing around in the first place." So it was the Austrians who actually had a real explanation.

And so in 2009, I wrote a book called *Meltdown*, about the financial crisis. It was pretty much the first book out on the financial crisis and it explained it from the point of view of the Austrian School of Economics, which really got a new burst of interest because their economists were not totally clueless, were not blindsided, were not taken completely by surprise as most economists were. And I'm happy to say that *Meltdown*, which was...I forget which book of mine that was, that was on the New York Times bestseller list for 10 weeks. Now, if you can get a book on The New York Times bestseller list on the economy and on the Federal Reserve for 10 weeks, that means people are really, really interested because normally that's about the last thing anybody would wanna read about.

Katie: That's incredible. Congratulations on that.

Tom: Thank you.

Katie: So to kind of wrap up, I wanna make sure I respect your time. But I feel like you are such an incredible resource and I'm gonna make sure I link to all the books that you've mentioned and to your podcast. But what do you feel like are some of the biggest misconceptions that people have when it comes to your area of expertise with history and economics? And what are ways that they can kind of learn the truth about these areas?

Tom: Well, one of them would be the thing I just mentioned about why economies go up and down. Even you get some conservatives who think, "Well, you know, that's capitalism. It has a lot of good but there's also some bad built into it." What kind of a defense is that? That's not very inspiring. So learning about how the Austrians deal with that question of why the economy goes in these cycles? Why do we have recessions? It's one thing, of course, I understand if there's a fall in demand for some product then yeah, that product is gonna have a depressed period. But why would that happen all across the board? You know there's no there's no obvious reason that that should happen. And the answer is well, when you keep fiddling with the most important thing the economy has to help entrepreneurs figure out what to do namely interest rates, you're gonna screw everything up when you do that. So that's a key thing because a lot of people think the Great Depression was caused by capitalism, it was capitalism run amok in the 1920s we've all heard this comic book story. But what else was happening the 1920s? You'll never guess, the Federal Reserve was pushing interest

rates super low and then eventually, the economy catches up to this and you have a very...you have a severe bust.

So, I would not fall for this...you know, the government is just an innocent bystander and then for no apparent reason the economy collapses. That...come on now what am I, three years old? Come on, that that's an insult to my intelligence. So that...people need to know about that Austrian theory of the business cycle. On a more elementary note, I would say we've all been taught that anybody who uses the term, States Rights, is a scoundrel, is a terrible person. That person probably favors slavery or at the very least segregation. So you can't have a serious conversation about this because you're being subjected to smears, career destroying smears by people who won't even listen to you. Well, the fact is when you actually look at the history, it's the exact opposite. Because in fact, Thomas Jefferson believed that the states had the right to refuse to enforce unconstitutional federal laws. He said this very explicitly in the Kentucky resolutions of 1798. And when we look at how that idea was used in American history, it was never in support of slavery, not even one time.

So just, very quickly, in 1798, this was used to resist the federal government's crackdown on free speech. You were not allowed to criticize the president in 1798 up until about early 1801. You could not criticize the president or the Congress, you would be subjected to fine or imprisonment and Jefferson said, "I'm pretty sure my copy of the Constitution says you're not allowed to do that." So they were threatening to have their states just refuse to enforce that. Or in the early 1800s, you had states that were speaking out against... In fact, you had the governor of Connecticut saying, "It's the role of the government of Connecticut to shield the people of Connecticut against the oppressions of the federal government." Whether it was their embargo that was destroying the Maritime economy of New England or their unconstitutional searches and seizures of ships or whatever. And you go all the way down in the 1850s, states rights were used in opposition to slavery.

In Wisconsin, you had people saying, "The Federal Government has passed this unconstitutional Fugitive Slave Act that goes way beyond what the Constitution allows, and so we're not gonna enforce it." And the Wisconsin legislature agreed. The Wisconsin state Supreme Court agreed that we have to defend our state sovereignty so that we can stand up against slavery and in favor of runaway slaves. So in other words, the real history of America is so much less comic bookish than what we hear in the mainstream media where, "State's Rights equal slavery." It is so low IQ, it's an insult. And it leaves out the real character and the real texture of the real American history.

Then if I had to think of a third one, well I'll pick one that's gonna really, that will shock people, and that will be in the 1930s. Of course, we're suffering the U.S. suffered from the Great Depression and the understanding we get from our textbook is that Herbert Hoover was a stupid head who didn't do anything, he just sat there and let the depression take its course while wise Franklin Roosevelt took power and used his magic to make things better. There is not one aspect of that story that is true and this is easily verified. Herbert Hoover was the most interventionist president we had ever had. And in his memoirs, he was patting himself on the back. He was saying, "We might have done nothing, instead, we launched the greatest exercise in economic reconstruction in the history of the Republic." And it's true. You could look through whether it was agriculture, or public works spending, or taxes, or tariffs, or subsidies to business or whatever, he was out in front on all of it.

But under Franklin Roosevelt, by the time you get to 1939, we're still at nearly 20% on unemployment, it never dips below double digit unemployment in the 1930s. So the idea that the government intervened and fixed it just doesn't seem right because this was the longest depression we've ever had. Now, we've had downturns before and the government really didn't do anything and eventually they just, you know, the economy is resilient and it resolves itself. So you can't say, "Well, they did fix it eventually so that shows the government works." They were always fixed in the past with no government involvement. So it can't be...I mean, in other

words, here's the one that drags on the longest and this is also the one where the government is involved to the greatest degree. Now, that doesn't prove anything in and of itself, but it's highly suggestive as a way to get started thinking about it. So that is to say a lot of what we've been taught seems to serve a certain ideological purpose and it's not really based primarily on the facts of the matter.

Katie: That's so fascinating. I love that about your work and like I said, I'll make sure that we include links. I would really encourage people. I know it's a deviation from the normal health topics but I think it's incredibly important thing in today's world, and you have such great resources on it. And I appreciate your time so much for being here. Thank you so much for your time, and for this interview, and for all the work you do.

Tom: My pleasure, Katie.

Katie: And thanks to all of you for listening, I'll see you next time on the Healthy Moms podcast.

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.