



1093: How to Break the Cycle of Overfunctioning & Deepen Intimacy With Christine Hassler

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

Katie: This episode is brought to you by Hiya Health, which I have a now extended and renewed interest in, especially with having a baby around who will be starting solid foods pretty soon. Because here's something that's kept me up at night as a parent, and I've talked about before. Our kids are the first generation growing up on not just ultra-processed foods, but foods that don't have the same nutrient content that they used to due to soil changes and so many other factors.

In fact, we're just beginning to understand the extent of this problem. And this is why Hiya exists and why I'm glad that they do, which is to give parents a real solution in a market that is flooded with kids' vitamins that are actually contributing to the ultra-processed foods. They have candy-like appeal, but not actual nutrition.

In fact, some children's vitamins on the market contain up to seven grams of sugar per serving and are stuffed with additives and petroleum-based dyes that I go to great lengths to avoid in my kids' diet. So Hiya took the opposite approach with zero sugar, zero gummy additives, just clean nutrition. And the great part is kids actually love them.

My younger kids are a huge fan. I have tried them, and the flavor is actually great, although obviously I don't take them daily. But what makes them different is how thoughtfully they are designed, formulated to meet very specific nutritional gaps that modern kids face. And they worked alongside pediatrician and nutrition specialists to make a chewable multivitamin that packs a blend of twelve organic fruits and vegetables and fills the common nutrient gaps that kids face.

They're also non-GMO, vegan, dairy-free, allergy-free, gelatin-free, nut-free. They really have thought of everything to make these ideal for kids. And they are NSF certified and receive Clean Label Project's Highest Purity Award. So when it comes to something I feel safe giving my kids, they are definitely on the list.

It's designed for kids two and up. They ship straight to your door. And I love that they send you a reusable bottle and stickers with your first order. So this helps you keep up with the refills, and they send refills every month as well. I am a big fan of these as well. And Hiya just launched something new.

If your kids are active and growing, you can add a clean protein powder with minerals designed just for kids to be exactly what they need. Their new Kids Daily Growth Plus Protein is a game-changer. It's more than a protein shake. It's a purity awarded clean protein powder with added minerals and healthy fats that can mix right into water or smoothies and support muscle development and cognition and fuel everything else they've got going on.

So, we worked out a special deal with Hiya. You can receive 50% off your first order on any of their products. To claim this deal, you must go to hiyahealth.com/wellnessmama. This deal is not available on their regular website. So again, that's H-I-Y-A-H-E-A-L-T-H.com/wellnessmama, and get your kids the full body support they deserve.

This episode is sponsored by BON CHARGE, and specifically one of my favorite things that they have, which is their PEMF mini mat. If you are new to PEMF, this stands for pulsed electromagnetic field, which is magnetic energy that's being sent into the body via this mat. And these energy waves are fascinating.

They work with your body's natural magnetic field to elevate your wellbeing in a multitude of ways. Similar effect that we would have from being in direct contact with the earth, which I also think is an amazing thing to do daily. I love PEMF mats to improve sleep, to ground me, to increase calmness.

I often say that sitting on one of these mats, I feel like a cat in the sunshine and just, like, so calm and cozy. Some of the reasons I personally like this particular mini mat, it is small enough to fit in any room, and it's easy to move from room to room. I also have a larger one, but that one is more difficult to move around.

There are different settings, so you can find what works best for you, and it's low EMF. Some of these are not. I feel like this is an important thing to pay attention to. Some easy ways that you can use a mini mat like this: it's great on an office chair or on a sofa or on the floor, wherever you are sitting and reading, meditating, working, et cetera.

I love to use it before bedtime or after a workout or I'm actually doing yoga teacher training. I'll often use it during restorative classes or when you need kind of like a creative boost or a brain reset. And like I said, I love how portable this one is. You can find out more about it and get a discount by using the code wellnessmama at wellnessmama.com/go/boncharge

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama podcast. I am really excited for this conversation with the amazing Christine Hassler, who has a resume that looks like an awards list, truly. She has some amazing books that I will link to in the show notes. She is a master coach, a spiritual psychologist, a facilitator.

She's been a speaker for 20 years, and Christine, you have such knowledge on so many topics. I'm so excited to jump in with you. Thank you so much for being here.

Christine: I'm really happy to be here. Thanks for having me.

Katie: Well, I... When I was researching for this, I was like, how am I gonna narrow this down? There's so many things that we could talk about. And one of the ones that really stood out to me that I think might really resonate with a lot of the women listening

especially, and especially moms, is the idea of over-functioning and why people who are capable and efficient often end up taking on a lot, and how to break that cycle consciously.

I know we hear a lot about the mental load in relationships right now. It's no secret that women take on a lot of that, often by default, and so I would love to kind of unpack this topic. I know you have some really effective strategies around this and are bringing both awareness and change to it in a way that's very conscious and beneficial.

So with that intro, it's a huge topic. Talk to us about over-functioning and what's going on behind the scenes when this is happening.

Christine: Oh, overfunctioning. Yes, if I write another book, it's gonna be how to underfunction because I feel like so many people, especially moms, need this. And especially moms of this particular generation because so much of our programming growing up was you can have it all.

You don't have to choose. You can have it all. And there's no way to have it all without overfunctioning. It- it's just, it's just impossible. So we can come back to that have it all topic. But let's look at what overfunctioning looks like, 'cause I bet a lot of women, especially mamas, don't even realize you're doing it, because it's just your default programming.

So a lot of times overfunctioning, it- it can start in childhood or it can really kick up in adulthood, especially motherhood. But for a lot of us, it starts in childhood. So there was usually something in childhood that made us have to grow up fast or made us believe that, like, if we kept kind of things in order, either through our behavior or through taking care of others or making life easier for our parents, there was more peace in our home.

So every child wants peace in their home. They wanna feel safe. They wanna feel loved. They wanna feel validated- validated. They wanna feel like they belong. And a lot of children, especially women, we want our parents to be okay. We're kind of born with this innate, caretaking, nurturing part of us. That's a beautiful part of being a woman and a beautiful part of being a mother.

However, it can end up a little bit boundaryless, and we can slip into the martyr or the selflessness. Again, we can come back to that. But this overfunctioning starts young. It's like, "Oh, well, if I do this, then Mom's happier." Or, "If I do this, Mom and Dad fight less." Or, "If I compromise 'cause my brothers are fighting, that just makes the house easier."

Or, "If I do really well in school, and, like, get good grades and play soccer and do this, then the teachers like me." So this overing starts pretty early. It can also begin... Like for me, one

of the ways it started is I had a really big belonging wound. I was teased a lot in school and didn't really fit in with my peer group.

And so I thought, "Well, if I'm not gonna belong, I'm just gonna be smart and achieve." And so that started this obsession with achieving and doing and, and we get into this overing pretty early, so much so that it becomes an identity. Which is why I said a lot of times we don't even realize we're doing it because it's all we know.

It's like the only way of being we know. And then, you know, by the time we get into our 30s, 40s, 50s and we realize it- It's, it's so well ingrained and our life is so set up so that, like, it's dependent on us that cognitively we may go, "Okay, I need to do less." Like, I'm not sleeping. I'm exhausted. I'm depleted.

My thyroid's off. I've got an autoimmune thing coming up. Like, now I'm in perimenopause. Like, it just stacks, right? And you add one kid and then another kid, or your case, you know, seven kids, and you kind of don't know how to get out of it because what happens to the over-functioning woman is like, "Well, if I stop doing this, then this falls apart.

And if I stop doing this, then it actually makes my life harder." And this is the belief that I really want to help women bust, because the thing that keeps us in the over-functioning pattern is, "If I stop doing all this, bad things will happen or life won't work as well," basically. And even underneath that, that more subconscious belief is, "Who will I be?

Will I still be needed? Will I still be valued?" And when we stop doing so much, the other thing that we avoid, sometimes consciously, sometimes subconsciously, is all the feelings and all the stuff we've suppressed over the years by doing so much. And when we stop doing so much, it's like, "Oh, wait. Oh my gosh.

Where is this anger coming from?" Like, this feels like the anger that I haven't processed towards my parents, or, "Oh, wait, I... There's this really big problem in my marriage," or what- whatever it may be. And so that over-functioning's protective, too, because it keeps us from lifting the rug and looking at what we really need to look at.

So I'll pause there, 'cause I'm sure you have questions at this point.

Katie: Yeah, I can resonate so much with so many parts of what you just said, and I would guess listeners can as well. I think I, definitely resonate with the achieve pattern from childhood and kind of this belief I had got that achievement was tied to being loved or belonging.

And like you, I didn't really fit in, so I was like, "Well, at least I can, like, do well in school, do all the extracurriculars, do all the things." And that pattern continued in my adult life with the kind of over-functioning until I got to the point of complete burnout. And looking back,

I'm like, probably it would've been much more healthy to address that pattern before I got into burnout and resentment and just complete depletion and Hashimoto's and all the things.

But I didn't know that then. I just know I hear from so many women who have very similar experience, and I'm curious, like, how can we shift that pattern of over-functioning, especially if we're already in family structure and relationship where that's kind of become the status quo for years?

Christine: Norm.

Katie: Yeah, which is what had happened to me. And so as things started shifting, there was this definite energy of like, "Well, why can't you just do all the things you've always done?" So it... I feel like in a logistical sense it can get kind of complicated to shift these things.

Christine: It is. And in be- a- a- for any substance to change, there has to be chaos in between.

So for, for change to happen, there's usually a disruption, and that's the part we wanna, that, that we're afraid of and we don't wanna go into. And because we've lived our life so long this way, we don't know another way, and unfortunately, it does take that, which is why I mentioned the thyroid and the autoimmune, because those type of things, Hashimoto's, are the type of things that women end up having.

I'm not making a, you know, causation. I'm just noticing a correlation in doing this with women for so long because our body is just so burnt out. You know, our mind might be strong, but our body is just burnt out. So there's a couple parts to it. First, as you mentioned, it's dealing with the, the kind of the core wound, the origin of why this over-functioning pattern started, right?

So for me, a big part of getting out of the overachieving and the over-functioning and being, you know, super ambitious and super driven, which is probably the area I've made the most progress in, 'cause I, I needed, like, a big career and achievement to make myself feel better about myself. So I had to go back, and I had to do inner child work, and I had to talk to that adolescent girl and help her understand that her worth is not in her achievement.

And I actually had to redirect my focus to making friends and nurturing that part of me. It was a developmental stage and phase I missed, and I... And that's what we do in childhood. Anything we miss, we find a compensatory strategy because we're wired for survival, not just our physical survival, but our emotional and cognitive survival as well.

And, and part of our survival needs is that belonging. So I had to give that to myself. And one of the things I say in my work is, "It's never too late to have a great childhood." And I'm

not dismissing the trauma and the difficult childhood that so many of us have had, but at some point, we have to go, "Okay, I don't have a time machine.

I can't go back in time, change my parents, change my circumstances. But I can change how I parent myself, right? And I can change how I relate to myself." So that's the first layer is really looking at the origin of where this started. Like, why did you start believing that you had to do everything?

Why did you start believing you had to achieve? Like, was it because you got validated for it? You know, 'cause nothing super bad has to happen. A lot of times, and I notice this with so many women, like, you just start getting lots of praise for, "Oh, my gosh, look at how well you picked up your room. Oh, my gosh, look at how well you compromised with your brother.

Look at that good grade. Oh, your teacher said you were so well-behaved." And we're like, "Oh, this feels good. Validation feels good. I guess I have to keep doing this." So that's the first part, going back and looking at the, the origin and having some tools and resources around that. And then there's the nervous system work.

So when we're in that overachieving, our nervous system is most often in that hyperarousal, that hypervigilance response, and that dysregulation. And when we're in that, again, we don't even realize 'cause it's such a, it's such a set point. And this is where a lot of the health problems start to happen because our bodies, if we're in that hyperarousal dysregulated nervous system a lot of the time, the cortisol shoots up.

Everything gets out of whack. You know, as women, we're cyclical, right? And when our hormones and our cortisol and all our neurotransmitters start to go out of whack, the body has to compensate in lots of other ways. So understanding that, like, nervous system work, and that's a whole nother podcast, but I can give just a few tips.

It's not just, you know, meditating for 30 minutes or doing an hour yoga class. Because often the biggest obstacle for women when we talk about nervous system is, "I don't have the time." So I wanna give... I'm gonna give just, three really short things you can do, and then separately one response you can, one behavioral response you can start doing with yourself that will start giving your nervous system different input.

Because basically the, the message we need to give your nervous system before you start making the outer changes, right? Before you start delegating the, the over-functioning woman's least favorite and most favorite word at the same time, is we gotta get the nervous system in a place where we're not gonna, like, jump back into the overdoing.

So three really, really quick ones. The first one is just taking a breath. And Zoom, Zoom kind of sometimes mutes the sound out, but basically I'm gonna take a deep breath, and then I'm just gonna do an exhale with horse lips. Just like... And just let your shoulders and everything drop on the exhale when you're doing that.

So you can do that in the car. You can do that with your kids. It's a great thing for kids to learn how to do. It starts to calm the vagus nerve, and it starts to give your nervous system different input. You just froze for a second.

The second tip I'll give you, and this is a great one to calm the optical nerve, and when we... If you think about our life, our eyes are open most of the time, and we're constantly and consistently taking in input, and all that input impacts our nervous system. So what you can do is you can form cups with your hands.

So if you're just listening, basically I'm just cupping my hands, and then I'm taking my palms and I'm gonna cover my eyes, but I'm gonna keep my eyes open. So what I'm doing is I'm making darkness around my eyes, but my eyes are open. My hands are creating darkness, eyes are open, and I'm just gonna breathe. In through my nose, and you can exhale through your mouth or your nose. It doesn't really matter

And you can do that for three breaths. And what that does is it basically tells your brain there's no alert. There's, there's no sirens. There's nothing to deal with. And it, it ca- like, because your opt- your eyes are open, right? So your, your brain knows I'm not sleeping, but they're not scanning for anything.

Your brain gets the signal is, "Oh, we can be awake and relaxed at the same time." So that's another one. And the third one I'll, I'll teach you, which is really just easy, is just bone tapping, bone striking. So you can, like, knock your collarbone. So you're basically just taking your knuckles, and you're not hurting yourself.

You're just lightly tapping bone. It can be your collarbone. It can be your elbow. Ribs are a great one. Knees are a great one. And again, this is just giving the body input to sh-downshift. So this is a great one. Even if I'm, you know, I'm stressed or I'm having a moment with my kid, I do this. I've taught her how to do the butterfly tap, where you grasp your thumbs together, kind of make butterfly fingers, and just tap on your collarbone.

And so that's something that she knows how to do, and that I'll do with her. And so those are just three little things that you can do, and I do these daily. Like, I put in the reps of these things, so I'm consistently giving my nervous system input. 'Cause, like, as a working mom, I wish I had time to meditate for 30 minutes a day.

I wish I could go to a yoga class. I wish I could get a massage. Like, I wish I could, like, do all those things that, you know, do relax the nervous system. I need quick, consistent inputs, and that quick, consistent input actually expands your capacity for your nervous system to downshift even more 'cause it's consistent.

You're consistently balancing out all the external stimuli with creating that downshift. So those are just three physical things you can do to impact your nervous system. And then the other thing that I'll say is when we're in that pattern of overdoing, a big part of breaking it is the awareness, okay?

So, like, we're having issues with our water filtration system in our house. Not a big deal, right? But it's just something on my very long list. And I asked my husband if he could take care of it. Came downstairs. It was still doing what it's doing. He hadn't called, and I felt that part of me jump to, "I'm just gonna do it."

Like, he's mov- he, he's not gonna take care of it or he's moving too slow. I need to handle. I'm gonna do it. And I, I, I have that awareness of that part. I've worked with it enough to know, oh, the over, you know, the hypervigilant piece is here. The, the part of me that thinks it's not gonna get done unless I do it or it's gonna get done most effectively and efficiently if I do it jumps in.

And so we wanna interrupt that part, hand on heart, hand on belly, and go, "Of course." Of course I wanna jump in. I'm used to fixing things. I've set up my life where I'm in control because that makes me feel safe. Of course, I think that it's best if I just can go and handle this. And you don't have to say all that.

You could just say, "Uh, of course I wanna fix it. I like fixing things. I wanna fix it." But could there be another solution, right? The most important part of this practice is interrupting the behavior. Because our brain, all ... I'm sure you've heard the neurons that fire together wire together. Our brain is just default programming most of the time, so we've got to interrupt it.

We've got to give our actions a time out, otherwise it just forms that repetitive patterns in our brain. So the of course is a time out. And the energetic you want to go into there is also the compassion for yourself. Like, of course you want to do this. Because that overdoing, it's coming from a scared place.

It's coming from a place inside of us that feels like it's all up to us. And that's like a re- a really heavy weight to carry, and it can be really lonely. And I think this is why so many women, especially moms, they may be surrounded by children and a partner, and they still feel so alone because they feel like no one's got their back.

But if we don't give people an opportunity to have our back, then we'll never prove ourselves wrong. Which brings me to the fourth part, and this is about slowly, not all at once, but slowly shifting our actions and enrolling other people in our life and giving them time to fail, you know? Time to not do it like we do it.

And you know, my mom was just here, and I was talking about something. And she's like, "Christine, just not everybody's as efficient as you are. But they have their gifts, too." And I was like, "You know what, Mom? You're right. You're right." And I forgive myself for buying into the misunderstanding that my way is the best way, 'cause there could be another way.

So I'll give an example of one thing I did with my husband. So I, I only have one daughter, and she's four and a half. And I really put, I'm very intentional about being the best mom that I can be. And I also find the parts of myself that put a lot of pressure on myself because my background is in developmental psychology.

So I know all the things I should be doing and all the ways I can, quote-unquote, "mess her up," right? And I, I often don't give myself much space to be human, you know? And to, to have my moments where I'm not, like, giving myself an A+ as a mom. And so a pressure I put on myself is, like, I have to be with her at night.

Like, I'm her attachment. Like, I have to be with her at night. And I breastfed for three years, and then in the night I was the one that was either sleeping with her or going to her or whatever. And just before she turned four I was like, "I'm, I'm dying. Like, I need sleep. Like, my hormones are going crazy.

I'm perimenopausal. Like, this is just not working." And I said to my husband, "Babe, it's your turn. Like- I, I, I can't. And I, I wish I hadn't gotten to that point. Like, I wish I'd been a little more proactive sooner. But like you said, sometimes we have to get to the point where we're, like, dying, and I think this is why we're having this conversation, to tell women, "Don't wait until you get to that point."

And we shifted things, so now he, he does the nights with her. And I'm sleeping. And oh, my God. What I've noticed is... Well, one, I feel a lot better, because not sleeping, we all know, is awful. But my hypervigilance has gone down because my nervous system is more relaxed because I'm actually sleeping. Has it damaged my relationship with my daughter?

No. Has it given my daughter and my husband a great opportunity to get closer? Yes. Does he do the same things at night that I would do with her? No. Is that okay? Yes. So that's just one example. I have many examples from my life. But for the women listening, I want you to start thinking, like, how have you set yourself up so that people can't help you?

You know, how have you set yourself up so that people think that you've just got it all covered, and so it doesn't even occur to them that you could possibly use some help? How have you set yourself up that your life has such high standards that the people around you feel like they can't help you, otherwise they'll disappoint you?

And that's a big one that I hear from spouses and, and employees and people around super high-functioning women, is, like, "I wanna help, but I feel like I'm gonna disappoint her because it's not gonna be as good as she does it." So how do we validate and encourage and celebrate the people in our life for the way that they're doing it as well?

Because at the end of the day, even though we have to go through that discomfort of things not working exactly like we'd want them to, everybody's gonna be okay. And in the long run, you being healthy and well is much, much, much more important than sending your partner to the grocery store and him forgetting a few things.

So that's what we've gotta think about in the long run.

Katie: Oh, I love that. So many good points to think of in there. And I got challenged in therapy. Actually, I realized I had this core childhood belief of like, "Oh, if I don't need anyone, then they can't hurt me." And I got challenged. Yeah. Like, that's not independence.

That's invulnerability. That actually keeps you from entering a relationship where you actually can be close with someone, including your child, because they never feel like there's actually that flow. And we'll get to the relational side with a partner later in this episode, but you brought up something with your daughter that I would love to touch on that's kind of tangential to this conversation, which is you mentioned many of these patterns for us originate in childhood, and we get to...

I love that phrase of it's never too late to have a great childhood. And I'm curious as a mom, and many of the people listening are parents, how can we or are there ways that we can help our kids create healthier patterns or perhaps avoid some of these pitfalls where they connect their worth to their achievement or some of these different things we've talked about?

And I would guess there's a modeling component, so probably yet another reason for Mom to do this work herself. But I'm curious if there are practical ways with your background in developmental psychology that we can support our kids in having a healthier relationship with kind of some of these things from the beginning.

Christine: Yeah. Great question, and you're right. I would say the majority of it is modeling, and I'm sure any mom can see. You can tell your kid all you want, but they're gonna model.

They're gonna model you. They're gonna model their peers. That's so much how children learn. In terms of what we can do, I think it depends on the age they're in.

I mean, my daughter's still in the age where stories are how she learns, so I teach her these things through play. I'll teach her. We'll be doing, we'll be doing play and, you know, someone will need help, and we learn empathy, but we also learn, like, how you encourage people to do things on their own. I teach her boundaries and repair, so I teach it all through play.

As our kids get older, talking to them in the moment about how you're working through a trigger is one of the best ways you can teach them, you know? So, I have someone that works for us, and I was frustrated about how she handled something and really just forgot something, which caused me stress.

And I, I worked it out in front of my daughter. I said, "I'm upset because of this. I'm feeling this in my body. I feel some tightness in my chest. I feel like I'm breathing faster. I feel like I wanna jump to do it. Okay, first thing I'm gonna do, I'm gonna, I'm gonna reg- I'm gonna regulate," 'cause my daughter knows that word, and this works well for older children too.

And I took her through the whole process of how I was basically handling my own trigger to it, and that's one of the best ways. I think one of the things we do as moms is we, we hide what we're going through 'cause we don't wanna burden our kids. And we're right, we... I n- it's never my daughter's job to make me feel better, but I don't hide what I'm feeling or experiencing from her.

I work through it in front of her. Not everything, right? That's not appropriate. Like, not everything. But whenever I see a teaching opportunity, I model it. And even my husband and I, when we have an argument, we repair in front of her so that she can, so she can see that. And then with our kids too, really, I mean, I think curiosity's one of the best things with our kids.

When they come and they tell us something, you know, like, "So-and-so asked me to help her with her homework because I'm so good at it." "Oh, hmm, what was your f- what'd you first think when she asked you that?" Or, "How, what do you think about that?" Instead of, "Oh, that's so nice of you," or, "Oh, you don't have time to help her. Like, you have your own homework to do."

Like, we're so kinda quick to jump to our reaction instead of getting into their model of the world. And different kids need different things, right? Some kids need to learn more empathy, some kids need to learn more boundaries, some kids are naturally people pleasers, some kids, feel everything and are more reactive.

So it's like I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all approach. I mean, you'd know better 'cause you have more kids. But I don't think you parent probably any of your kids in the same exact way 'cause they're all different. But I think one of the best things we can do as parents is not project ourselves onto them, not have an idea of who we want them to be, who we think they should be, but really try to get into their model of the world as best as we can, and help them with their analytical thinking, help them understand the why of which they're doing things.

Like last night, I was leaving for an appointment. My daughter's teacher came over to babysit her, but yesterday her dad left for a three-week trip. That day her grandma and aunt that were visiting also left. So a lot of people were leaving, and then I was leaving. And the babysitter came and asked her, "Oh, how you feeling?"

And she said she was feeling scared, and this is a teacher and a babysitter she knows well. And later that night, I said, "Honey, I'm curious why you said you were feeling scared. Is there a reason you said that?" And she said, "Well, I feel like if I said I was feeling scared, you wouldn't leave." I said, "Were you really feeling scared?"

"No, but I didn't want you to leave." And I said, "Oh, that was really, that was really thoughtful that you thought that much about it. And do you know you can just tell me how you... that you don't want me to go, that that's okay?" And she said, "Yeah, but I didn't think it would work." So it was, this was just a great conversation because it's like, oh, wow, like you're already developing ways to get your needs met, you know?

And so we just talk through that, and it is in that curiosity and really getting in their model of the world and understanding, and not saying, "You're not scared. You've known... This is Miss Jen. She's your teacher. You've known her for years. She's your favorite." 'Cause when we start to... You know, and it comes from good intentions.

We wanna help our kids feel better, but I think there's so many instances that when parents, in an attempt to make their kids feel better, miss a huge teaching opportunity. And the more comfortable we can be with our own discomfort, our own discomfort, the more comfortable we can be with their discomfort.

And that's one of, I think, the best things I've done as a mom is I'm so, I'm welcoming to my own discomfort and my own feelings and my own stuff, and I don't cover it up or suppress it. So when she's having big feelings or she's uncomfortable, my first attempt, my first goal is never to make her feel better. It's to help her process through them.

Katie: Yeah, I love that so much. And I think so much in parenting, and I'm by no means perfect at this, but so much can get missed if we jump straight into solving or correcting or trying to get them to get to a certain outcome. And I've seen so many examples in my life

when I'm able to be in curiosity over correction, that there is often a story I would never have known had I not stayed curious.

Like, if something happens that's, you know, an accident or whatever, if I jump straight into like, "Why did you do that?" Which is an unanswerable question for a child anyway, I would miss the story. And if I get curious of like, "Hey, what happened or what's going on?" There's often a very sweet reason that they were doing that thing.

Or like with little ones, they were trying to help with something and they just didn't have the skill to do whatever it was yet, and it's so sweet. And I do feel like as they get older, that translates into my teenagers will come in my room at night when I'm nursing the baby and they'll talk to me about stuff, or they'll talk to me about problems their friends are having that their friends aren't talking to their parents about.

And I, I don't think I've ever even run into an instance where my kids have, like, kept stuff or lied to me. But even in that situation, I think my first response would be, like, genuine, like, "I'm so curious why didn't it feel like you could come talk to me about this?" Or like, "Why didn't it feel safe to say that?"

Like, I wanna know what's going on in your world that that didn't feel okay to you. So I love that you-

Christine: Yeah

Katie: ... take that approach. And, yeah, and I, I think this also plays out, like, I hope that I haven't modeled the wrong thing for too long, where, like, as I tried to fix the over-functioning, that ended up not being beneficial to my marriage, and my ex and I are no longer together.

And I hope that I haven't left that impression with my kids that my value was in over-functioning, and then when I stopped it, the relationship unraveled. So I'm trying to do a lot of active work around building relationship with them and making sure that we have conversations. And I feel like this is one of the great works of life, is getting to have a failure and talk through it and, like you said, process in front of them without giving them our emotions, but making sure they feel heard

Christine: - Right

Katie: and we're curious about them and their experience of it without putting ours on them. You also mentioned-

Christine: Yes, yes

Katie: ... earlier that these compensatory patterns often show up. Like, if we have these unresolved things or these patterns created in childhood especially, they'll keep showing up in relationship, and I've heard that from various guests of like we'll kind of play out these childhood patterns in our adult relationships until we resolve whatever was underlying of that.

And I certainly had my experience with that. I, I hear from people who have had similar experiences. So now I'd love to shift a little bit into the adult relationship side of this picture. And for anyone who maybe can resonate with that or is in a relationship and can start to notice these patterns showing up, how do we begin to do the work of not repeating the same patterns in our relationships over and over?

And hopefully either healing the relationship or resolving the pattern in a way that's amicable and kind, so that we don't have to keep playing out this drama for the rest of our lives.

Christine: Yes, we are usually subconsciously attracted, very attracted to people who remind us of our family of origin. And a- again, it's not super conscious.

Like, we don't go, "Oh, this really... This guy really reminds me of how my father was unemotion- emotionally unavailable, and, like, I never really felt like I could be myself. I'm gonna marry him." I mean, this isn't something we consciously play out, but there is that pull. And so I just wanna zoom out for a moment.

So I, I, I've been... Gosh, I've been in therapy since I was 10, is when I saw my first psychiatrist. And I'm not in therapy now. I have coaches and things that I work with, but I've done everything. And then I've been coaching people for 22 years, and what I've seen and what I've felt and what I've kind of intuited, and what I've learned from great teachers, and I think we can all agree to this at some point, that, you know, the...

Just like the entelechy of an acorn is to become an oak tree, the entelechy of the human soul is to evolve. And if we think of evolution, you know, kind of on the 3D level, we think, oh, it's like, who do you marry? Well, how much money do you make? How many kids do you have? What job do you have? And we kind of think that that's what the goal of life is.

And all those things are amazing, and those are, like, incredible parts about life, but really, like, if we're talking about soul evolution and the evolution of consciousness, our, our core, the who, the who we are is love. Like, bottom line, we are lovable, we are worthy, we are enough, we are magnificent, like, and we are all one. But life happens and that gets super muddled, and we think we're not lovable, we think we're not worthy, and we think we're not enough in some way.

And so we form all these compensatory strategies, like you said, to try to get those things back. Well, real, like, consciousness evolution is to go wait. Oh, wait, nothing outside of me does that for me. Like, this is an inside job. But we need the triggers to bring awareness to them, right? Like, you probably wouldn't be saying the things you said or at the point you are, having those revelations in therapy, if you didn't have the relationship you had, and the marriage you had, and the life you had because it, it triggered you enough to go wait a second.

Like, I, I, I, something needs to shift, right? And so often in relationships and, and in marriages, we're drawn to people that will trigger our childhood stuff. And we're kind of like, well, why? You know, that doesn't sound fun. Well, it gives us an opportunity to change it. Like, we real- i- in the human world, we learn through contrast.

We know hot because we know cold, right? And so it is in that contrast and in those triggers, and relationships are great for that, that we start to wake up. And if we have a partner who is like, "Okay, here's me and my baggage, and here's you and your baggage. I'm gonna work on my baggage. You're gonna work on your baggage, and then we have this third entity called the relationship that we're a team for and that we're gonna work on together.

But I am not here to fix you and be the parent you never had, and you're not here to fix me and be the parent I never had." But we still kind of subconsciously project our parental stuff. Like, one of the things that in my marriage, my husband didn't have a great relationship with either one of his parents, came from an abusive household, never really felt like his mom was available for him.

And so that's a huge button. Like, whenever he feels like I'm not available or, you know, my attention is going to Athena or I have something going on with my health, it's really triggering for him. Not him, the 44-year-old man in 2026, but the little boy who feels like, oh, Mom ... I just lost Mom. Like, she's not, she's not there, right?

And so we know that's one of our triggers, and he knows that in his work, he's like, "This is not my mom. This is my wife. She's not here to mother me." Because, you know, it can be a big turn-off in relationships if your partner is subconsciously projecting their parental wounds on you. You kind of feel like you're the parent.

It ... no one wants that, right? So we need the language and we need the awareness to go, okay, like, this is actually, like, not me. This is your stuff. I'm going to give it back to you. But what I see a lot of women do, so a lot of women fall into a safety strategy called the merging strategy, and to sum it up, we can use the word codependence.

We do the I'm okay if you're okay, and I'm not okay if you're not okay. So often we will go into the fawning, the fixing, like what dance do I need to do to make you okay because I don't

really like your discomfort 'cause it makes me uncomfortable. And this is where a lot of women sell out in relationship, is they end up just going along to get along. Suppressing their own needs, not being a stand, an a- for their own voice, kind of going into those patterns from childhood, and then, you know, wake up miserable because they've spent their life trying to manage someone else versus really being a stand for what they need.

And this is why, you know, the inner child work is so important so that we don't end up projecting this on our partners. But back to my initial point, you really need two people in a relationship who are willing to look at their own stuff and aren't looking to the partner to make them feel a certain way.

Do we have needs in a relationship? Absolutely. Are there things, are there needs and agreements I have with my husband? And, and we are relational, right? So we do impact each other and we do make each other feel certain ways. But there's certain needs that, like, I can't project on him and, and needs that he can't project on me as well.

Because when we get into that, then we're in that, like, codependent enmeshment, you know, insecure attachment, all that stuff starts coming up. Did I answer that question?

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. Beautifully. And it reminded me of my friend Ryan, who's done a lot of work with trauma survivors, says the beauty is in the contrast.

And while we can go through those really deep, dark places, it also opens us up to the experience of more joy and peace. And I love that as a concept to, like... A- and a reminder when we are in the darker periods. I also loved... it reminded me of s- this quote that I've heard that, you know, we come here thinking our goal is to be loved, but really our goal is to be love for ourselves and for others.

Christine: Yes.

Katie: And I love that. But I think even that idea that just we're not here to parent or fix each other, I think that as a starting point could help so, so many relationships. And I've, I've also heard you talk about in other interviews, how men and women are, of course, biologically different, but also nervous system different, like there's a lot of differences, and that understanding those sides of things can actually help...

And, and our relationship styles can actually help create more intimacy 'cause we're not, like, kind of projecting our experience onto the other person or vice versa. Can you talk about that a little bit? 'Cause I think that is really groundbreaking for a lot of people to understand.

Christine: Yeah. And we can tie this to over-functioning too, because so for the female nervous system, we need to feel safe, and one of the ways that we feel safety from the

masculine is through consistency and certainty and presence, right? And if we don't feel that, we are going to be even more inclined to go into over-functioning because we don't feel like we have that masculine really holding us, right?

And so the female nervous system needs, needs from the masculine nervous system safety, consistency, and presence. Like, one of the things that I say to my husband is- If you say you're going to do something, you need to do it. Like, there, there just cannot... Like, full stop. Because when I see you forget something or not do something, I stop trust- like, I stop trusting you.

I go back into over-functioning. My nervous system elevates again. Same thing with moods and reactivity. So a lot of time for a man, they might not think they're talking loudly or in a tone or being reactive, but the female nervous system picks up on, like, every, every nuance of that. So the consist- not that men are supposed to be like robots or whatever, but the consistency in mood and the not, like, the up and down and not, like, the big reactivity.

That can be very dysregulating for the female nervous system as well 'cause we're always tracking. The other thing that's important for the female nervous system is that vulnerability and intimacy, right? And I don't think... I think that it's a lie that men aren't vulnerable and don't crave intimacy.

They do. You know, I have three nephews. I'm sure you have boys. Like, they're, they're just as big of feelers, you know? It's not that they feel less or... I think it's just kind of conditioned out of them over time, and luckily we're changing a lot of that. So, you know, the female nervous system needs to be met in that vulnerability.

We need from the masculine, we need to know what you're thinking. We need to know what you're feeling. We, we don't, we don't want you to be this rock who never feels anything, 'cause we can feel that in our system. So we need that open communication. And for the masculine, and this is where when the woman's too much in over-functioning, it's really hard for the masculine because he doesn't know where he fits.

So the masculine needs to feel purposeful. They need to feel like they matter. They need to feel respected. And that... And we're making some generalizations. I'm not saying that women need this and men don't, and men need this and women don't. This is, this is human. We all need it. But when we're talking about polarity, the, the masculine, that nervous system needs to feel respected and needed and purposeful.

But if we have this over-functioning woman over here, it's like, where does he, where does he go? And he's like, "Well, I'll just go work because, like, over here I feel purposeful." So part of that respect and appreciation is making sure he feels purposeful in the dynamic,

right? That we're not doing so much that we're just building resentment because then there's no respect, there's no appreciation, there's no purpose on that end as well.

So where the female nervous system is more fed and nourished through safety, through consistency, through vulnerability and connection, the masculine nervous system is more relaxed if it feels purposeful, intentional, respected and appreciated.

Katie: Yeah, that makes sense, and I can see how those patterns can easily get, like, missed in the modern world and especially with over-functioning and how that could kind of create a downward spiral where both people might have really good intentions, and they're just kind of missing because they don't feel like there's a place within the current existence and dynamic to fill those things.

And so then it could be easy for that to-

Christine: Yeah

Katie: ... show up for a man in work or for a woman in just over-functioning and feeling needed by her kids or whatever it may be. And I think that also touches on something. Not everybody listening might be in a place of trying to call in a partner or dating, but I know I do hear from quite a few women who are and feel like that's kind of a tough thing in the modern world.

And I have noticed for myself even after being married there was part of me that wanted to be loved and deeply seen and all these things, and I was still protecting myself really severely from receiving that. So I also can look back and recognize, like, I did not make that easy on my ex-husband because of my own wounds that I at the time didn't even see. But what does that usually look like? And then if a woman does, is looking for a partner and wants to call that in how can she open herself to that in a safe way? Because I know I hear from a lot of women who they, they feel unsafe in a lot of ways with men in, in the world currently.

Christine: Yeah, which makes so much sense. So the first thing I'll say is of course. Like, of course. That makes so much sense. So we acknowledge it. We, we see it's there. We... and we don't make it a problem. Like, it's not a problem. It's more, okay, this is here, and? And then we go into understanding. So, and this is what I hear, too.

A lot of women think they're too much in their masculine, and that's not why they're attracting a partner, and it's really not. It's your hypervigilance that looks like masculine because most people, you know, aren't trauma-informed enough to go, oh, wait, that's actually hypervigilance. That's not masculine.

So gosh, heartbreak is so hard, and it starts so young. You know, it starts so young with our parents, particularly our father, peer groups, first love, whatever it is, and each time there's a heartbreak there's a protector part that forms like a little soldier. It's like the guard at the gate. And then another heartbreak happens.

Oh, we need more guards. And then another heartbreak. Oh, here comes another soldier. And so we think we are protecting ourselves, but we're actually blocking ourselves, right? And making ourselves unavailable for intimacy. And we're out of alignment with our natural feminine superpower, basic anatomy. We are the receivers.

But we have so many protectors there, there's no, there's no place to get in. It's like Fort Knox. Even if we say we're ready and we think we're ready, there's a part of us that's, that's like, well, I'm ready, but I've got all these soldiers here. So I know I'm gonna be okay because, like, I'm... you know, I've got all my guards.

What I like to teach women, and we... my husband and I teach this in a program together- is how to take everything that you've experienced and turn it into embodied wisdom. Embodied wisdom is much different than having all these protector parts that are based on fear trying to keep your heart from being broken again.

Embodied wisdom is I've processed and learned from all the hurt. My heart is not broken. My heart is whole and complete, and all these hurts, all these learnings, even though they were painful, they were for my growth, and I have the embodied wisdom now. And with that embodied wisdom, there are two things that are true.

One, I don't have to keep attracting the same thing because I don't have all these soldiers in front of me. I've embodied the wisdom, so my frequency has changed. My attraction point has changed. And second, if something were to come in that potentially could be like a pattern in the past or potentially could be painful, I can trust my embodied wisdom, my body, my discernment, another feminine superpower, to know this is a no.

And I should say third, love is risky, and I know that even if I get hurt, even if this is difficult, I have all this embodied wisdom. I got me. Like I'm gonna be okay no matter what. That is a true heart that's open, right? And that's when women shift their attraction point, and instead of coming from fear and protection and control, because women think that, you know, we think that we have power and certainty and we stay safe through controlling things, through having our list, through knowing how things are gonna go, to having a certain way we want things done.

When we haven't created safety in our nervous system by doing our own internal work, we try to create safety- safety in our nervous system through control. And when we do that,

we're not in the polarity that generally will draw in a man whose nervous system will be a match to us, right? Because we're too in that control piece.

So this is something that I had to work on. I'm on my second marriage. I didn't meet my husband until I was 41. I really was that over-functioning woman who was protecting herself from hurt, who was doing all the right things and dating. No one could figure out, like, why I was so painfully single.

I eventually figured it out, ditched all the dating advice and programs out there, put myself through my own program that I now teach of really calling in what I call a soul match. And the way I describe a soul match is instead of like there's five different kinds of relationships. We don't have to go through them all now, but the, the fifth one and the one I think we're all after is a side-by-side partnership, where it's not are you gonna fix me?

Are you gonna make me happy? Are you gonna be the mom I never had? Are you gonna be the dad I never had? Are you gonna, like, resolve all the hurt I've had from men my entire life? Are you gonna be the woman that makes me feel amazing? Like instead of looking at that, we are two people carrying our own baggage. Walking in the same direction toward our aligned vision and values.

And that's the kind of relationship that's a growth-based relationship, that's a relationship that's based on our present and our future, not, not attracting from our past. And we can't get to that point if we still have all these little soldiers and Fort Knox built around us in an attempt to protect ourself.

Because it's kind of an illusion that we're protecting ourselves. We're actually just preventing ourselves from having the love and the intimacy in the relationship that we desire.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's a tough realization, and one that I only recognized before in hindsight, was like I think you're totally right, that control being the strategy for women to try to avoid the pain of certain things, and realizing, like, there is literally nothing you can do, no matter how much control you try to exert, that will keep you from getting hurt or from someone leaving you or from someone disappointing you.

All you're doing is actually preventing them from loving you or you loving them completely. And so I love this model because it shifts it in, instead of looking for that person who's gonna complete you, coming in complete and whole, and finding that person who's gonna complement you so beautifully.

And I'm still on my own journey where I don't feel ready for that yet, but I love that reframe. I think that's so valuable, even in just the way we interact with people in general. Like, having

that completeness within ourself allows us to have more intimacy and vulnerability in friendships and in the way we connect with our kids.

And it's so, so powerful and beautiful. I hope that we get to actually have more conversations in the future 'cause there's so much we didn't even get to yet. But I know you mentioned a program that you have specific to the parts we just talked about, and I know you have books as well. I'll link to all of those in the show notes.

But can you give people a primer on what you guys teach, for anyone who that's really resonant for right now?

Christine: Well, thank you so much for asking that. So I mentioned the program that my husband and I teach together that came out of my own work of really wanting to call in a side-by-side relationship. And we're actually doing a free three-day workshop October 13th, 14th, 15th called Love Magnet, where we're gonna unpack some of the things we talked about.

I'm gonna talk about a lot of the myths that are out there about dating and relationships and men, and it's great to have my husband there because he is very connected to the minds of men. We're gonna go through the five types of relationships that I mentioned. We're gonna take you through some somatic exercises, and my biggest, intention with this three-day workshop, and we've done it for many years now, since 2019, is I...

You will leave feeling relief in your nervous system. I feel like there's so many programs and, and teachings out there, especially when it comes to calling things in, that just throw us more into our hypervigilance and more into our doing, and the Love Magnet will move you more into your receiving, into your relief, into your magnetism, and into your clarity, right?

Because that, that yearning to call in a relationship, it's not just for the relationship. There's something deeper. You might not know what it is, but there's something deeper inside of you that you're wanting to access. It's, it's bigger than self-love. It's bigger than self-care. It really is a reclamation back to who you are before there was any heartbreak, before there's any family of origin, before there was any relationships, like the reclamation of who you are.

So when we talk about Love Magnet, we're not just talking about calling it in, although I do teach that. It's more about, like, like you said, the return to, oh, I am love. I am love. And so if you wanna join us for that, it's christinehassler.com/wellnessmama. That's your unique link. And then the other great place to connect is my podcast.

I coach people on the air. It's called Life Coaching with Christine Hassler, and it's always an unscripted, unedited, unproduced, coaching episode where we dig into some of this family

of origin and childhood and relational and compensatory strategy stuff, so that I'd love to connect with people there as well.

Katie: And one quick follow-up question. For someone who may already be in partnership and is like wanting to improve the relationship with a significant other, other, is this still something that could be really beneficial? Like I could see-

Christine: Yes

Katie: ... how this would be really valuable for someone finding nervous system safety, thinking of that relationship as an entity they can both nurture...

Christine: Yes, absolutely. We've had many women who are married or dating or thinking they need to get divorced and want clarity about that. And I say openly, I've been married to my husband for eight years, and I think we're on our fourth marriage. We've had to get divorced several times because we're like, "Whoa, this isn't ... This is not working. Mm-mm.

Let's..." I think we're on, you know, marriage 4.0 in, in, in our marriage. And so what is so beautiful about being a woman is when we get out of the control and the overdoing and the hypervigilance, we actually tap into our power. Like, we are the muse. We are the creatrix. We, we are so powerful. And we get into, in marriage especially, in relationships, we get into trying to manage our partner, change our partner.

I know with my first husband, you know, we got married young. It was really at the beginning of my spiritual awakening. It was our late 20s, early 30s. And I just so wanted him to be on the journey with me. So I'd send him to all the podcasts. I'd drag him to the retreats. I'd ha-"Read this book," you know?

Instead of just becoming it and embodying it and then calling him forward by being the great receiver, by being the creatrix, by being in my feminine. And so for women in relationships, this, this will really help you tap back into your power. So instead of, like, extending that overachieving hypervigilance arm to just try to fix him, 'cause you can see clearly how he needs to change, I mean, it's so obvious to you. Bringing it back on you and, and being in your most embodied queen self, and then you know for sure.

Because you don't want someone to change because you're trying to get them to change. You- because they're motivated to change. You want them to be inspired to change because then it's actually lasting, and that's what you get to learn how to do.

Katie: Amazing. Well, I will make sure all those links for anybody on the go are at wellnessmama.com in the show notes.

And Christine, this has been such a fun conversation. Like I said, I hope we get to have follow-up ones in the future.

Christine: I'd love that.

Katie: I really enjoy your work and have learned a lot from you and might join you in the workshop as well. Thank you so much.

Christine: Aw, I'd love to have you there. We've had a lot of women nursing on our calls and having little babies and, you know, because it is, it is.

I mean, the work of relationship I think is some of the most deepest, the deepest and potent work that we do because it's, it's, it's, it's confrontive. You know? It's really. Yeah. And, and my husband and I, we are very open about the fact that, like, even when you do all the work, it's still work. You know?

It's still, it's still work, but having that willingness is... It keeps, it keeps you going. So, and I really acknowledge you for your vulnerability and your openness and, like, the fact that, you know, even with being a working mom whose life is really full, like, you've taken time off to do your inner reflection and work.

That's so inspiring and it's so good to hear for that high-achieving women that, oh, wait, like, actually that inward reflection is so valuable. So thank you for that.

Katie: Oh, thank you, and thank you again for your time and your wisdom today and for sharing all that you have. And of course, also thanks to all of you for listening, for sharing your most valuable resources, your time, your energy, and your attention with us today.

We're so grateful that you did, and I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the Wellness Mama podcast.