



Healthy Moms Podcast

BY Wellness Mama[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 149: Saunacast: Genetics, Personalized Medicine and Random Health Experiments

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Katie: Hi and welcome to RandomCast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com.

Heather: And I'm Heather from mommypotamus.com.

Katie: And this is going to be one of our fun, random episodes, where we are going to touch on a lot of topics, so stay with us. We would love to hear your feedback on any of these in the comments or the show notes, which are at wellnessmama.fm. And we're probably also, as we usually do, going to mention all kinds of random stuff. And the links for those will be in the show notes as well.

But to start, I know we have a huge list, Heather, that we want to cover today. Do you want to jump on the big topic first? Which is that we both are seeing a pattern that the future of health and all the research seems to be pointing toward everything being very personalized and varied and what that looks like as moms. Because it is one thing to look at PubMed and to see the research on genes and the research on gut health, but we are the ones who have to actually, practically apply that to our children. So let's jump in there.

Heather: Yeah. Gosh, I started pursuing a healthy lifestyle and it was like, "No! There's this one diet and it works for everyone!" And then, a couple of years later, they were like, "We kind of got that wrong. Take this one thing out of the diet, add this other thing in, and then you're good." And you know, through the years there have been a lot of different phases of that. But ultimately where we ended up was testing for genetic polymorphisms and seeing what is unique to us and how that interacts with our environment.

But I remember the first time I got a genetic test back and looked at the results. I felt completely overwhelmed. I'm like, "Look at all this!" The report that we had, we ran it through like LiveWello, which is a report that you can look at and it has green, yellow, and red. And I'm like, "Look at all the red. It's so overwhelming."

But there's so much that has happened since then, that it takes that data, which wasn't really actionable a few years ago and makes it actionable today, and helps us understand it and apply it to our lives a lot better.

Although there is still a lot that we're learning. We used to think that, you know, if you had MTFHR that you had to do XYZ and it's not looking like that now. It looks like there's different approaches to everything.

Katie: Yes, I think you're right, that the personalization and the testing, now we have a lot more information, but it's also a lot more to interpret. So it's cool that there are now tests that are able to give us more of the applicable thing. Because I think you're right, with genes it's like you just think, "Everything is bad. Everything is red. What do I even do?"

But now there's ones like...we both love Dr. Rhonda Patrick from FoundMyFitness. We will link to her podcast in the show notes, because she is amazing. We joke that we have a brain crush on her. So if anybody knows her personally, I would love to interview her. So please let her know. But she has a great genetic report on her website at foundmyfitness.com, that really delves into not just the raw data, but what does it actually look like. Like, "How would you interpret that in your daily life?"

And so, one example that you and I have talked about recently, I literally wrote the book on coconut oil. Not the book, but the post! For years -- and we still do -- we rank number one for the term, "coconut oil." I did all this research when saturated fats used to be bad and it was like, "They are obviously not bad and that is the teaching of Weston A. Price." And I absolutely agree with it.

I think that, objectively, saturated fats are not bad. I would argue that, if you are eating them with sugar, they would become what Dr. Hyman calls, "sugar fat," which is super bad, or, "sweet fat." But objectively they are actually good for your body. It turns out, unless you are me. So with Dr. Rhonda Patrick's test, you can run your 23andMe results through that and it gives you a more interpretive view of certain snippets.

I had one and I believe you do too, because we obviously share and do everything together, that said like, "Really, I should never eat saturated fat, because not only will it make it hard to lose weight, but it can also mess with my brain and do all kinds of other stuff." Do you have that as well? The FTO?

Heather: Yeah, mine said to just increase the ratio of unsaturated and monounsaturated fats, so olive oil and those kinds of things over things like butter. So we are still doing butter, but we definitely have increased our consumption of olive oil and those kinds of fats to sort of balance things out. Yeah. And another one that when I ran the report I thought was really interesting and kind of went with something that I think is really an interesting part of where medicine is heading. That is that sometimes old is new again.

At one point, we were looking at these genetic tests and sort of looking at the tests instead of the people, and the tests instead of the individuals. And I think there's a lot of ways the body can accomplish any one goal. So even with certain things, if you have a polymorphism, you may have a mutation in one direction, but you also may have a mutation that is compensating it in a different direction. So we used to assume that, just because there is one mutation, that that particular cycle or function in the body wasn't working, but that may or may not actually be true.

And so, we are still learning a lot, but one that really resonated with me -- even more than for me the saturated fat, because I only ran it recently and I have increased my olive oil intake, but I haven't really noticed a huge difference in how I am feeling or anything -- but one that did resonate for me was it showed that genetically I am predisposed to low vitamin D levels. It's just that my body is not making conversions really well in certain areas of that process.

My husband jokes that when I get crabby he needs to put me in the sun, because it's really true. I remember when I was pregnant with my daughter, it rained the first four months of the pregnancy and I cried every day that it rained, because I just wanted to go out in the sun. I feel like intuitively I knew my body was craving sunlight. I think it just knew that that's what was needed at that time and the fact that it kept raining just was frustrating me to... It was just unbelievably frustrating.

So when I looked at that I was like, "Yes! That resonates with me. That makes sense and my body is intuitively compensating for this thing that just doesn't work that well."

Katie: Yeah. I think that's a great point, especially with the contrasting polymorphisms, because I think even the experts like Dr. Ben Lynch and Dr. Rhonda Patrick, all these people are saying now, "Don't look at any one polymorphism in a vacuum, because it's dangerous when you just go, 'Oh, okay. I have MTHFR. I should take all the methylfolate.'" Well, maybe not, because maybe you have one that compensates.

And I think, to your point, listening to the body is an important point as well, because when we learned about lizards in school, my kids were like, "Yeah. It's like you, Mom. You want to lay on a warm, sunny rock." And I'm like, "Yeah." Different reason. I am not cold-blooded, but it's because of the vitamin D.

Heather: That's so weird! Because you know how we joke we share a brain? I remember my dad took me on vacation to Mexico when I was a little kid and I saw these iguanas on a rock and I made it like a life goal to be an iguana! Or at least to live as much like an iguana as possible, because I love warm sun. Anyway. I didn't know that about you!

Katie: Well, we will talk about a couple of tests, but then I want to go back to the variation key as well. So, we just did with our kids genetic testing. I had never done all of theirs with 23andMe, just because there were some privacy concerns with whether or not they share any data. And so, we kind of lied about our names. I don't know if I should say that on record, but we just did, whatever. We lied about our names, so that they're not actually tied to us! But I didn't want to have to try to figure out fake names for all my kids.

So we just found out about one from a friend of ours and it's called, "Nutrition Genome," which will be linked in the show notes as well. A super easy process, you don't even have to spit into a cup. You just swab the inside of your mouth. So I could do it on the baby even.

Heather: Wow.

Katie: And it's really cool, because they delve more into the nutritional side, instead of just the raw genetic data. And I know that 23andMe, which is also a good option, has gotten so much better. Now that they have FDA approval, they can give you a lot more information. But I think when we both did it, it was very much like, "Here's your random snippets that don't mean anything to you." And you have to go figure out how to interpret it.

I feel like Nutrition Genome kind of breaks that down. And then, we also have done Viome, which was really interesting to see, because I compared genetic testing to Viome, side-by-side. And when I first got Viome back, it was before I learned about the FTO and the saturated fat thing for me. And I'm like, "Why on earth?" I'm like, "This can't be right. It's telling my not to eat any beef, or butter, or coconut oil, but all these things are

healthy. Why is it telling me not to eat them?" And then the genes kind of corroborated that.

So it makes sense and I get it. But it's interesting to see too, because I feel like, for instance, if you are fasting, you can do your blood ketones and you can also do your breath acetones, which gives you the comparison between, "How many ketones are you making and how many ketones are you burning? I feel like the synergy there is genetic tests tell you what your genes are and the RNA and the gut from Viome kind of tell you what is actually expressing. So it's really cool to pair those up.

Heather: That is really cool. One of the things -- because we are going to be trying Viome soon -- one of the things I'm so curious to find out too is how things shift over time. As your microbiome changes, is it activating certain genetic expressions? So I don't think we have any idea yet what we can know in five years, as we start to track things over a period of time. It's really cool.

Katie: Yeah. And then one we will probably have to talk about more in depth in the future -- there's not really time today -- but like the energetic side, the bio-energetic side of it as well. I recently got trained in the miHealth device from NES Health. And that's really fascinating, because it's truly just a scan of your body that I was completely skeptical of until it came up and showed me every single thing that was in my blood test and genetic test. I was like, "That's kind of amazing and creepy at the same time."

So I will link to that as well for anybody interested in reading it. But we were both also saying that it's so cool that now we have all these tools at our disposal. There's also Life Extension, which there will be a link to that in the show notes, where you can pretty much pick whatever test you want to get without a doctor, and ten years ago that was unheard of.

So the fact that any of us right now can go on the Internet and order all these tests and kind of figure out our own... It took me eight doctors to get a diagnosis for my thyroid. And now it's like, I could have just gone on and ordered this huge blood panel for under \$200 and figured it out." And then taken that to a doctor and be like, "I need thyroid medication. Thanks." We're just in a different place now. So that's really cool to see for moms.

Heather: I do think too that I've encountered so many families that are dealing with very rare conditions. And not even rare, sometimes there's just a lot going on in a lot of families and moms are so tenacious. They are the ones who tuck their little ones in at night and they care the most about getting to the bottom of issues, and not just maintaining them, and not just medicating them.

So putting these tools in moms' hands I think is just amazing, because there's nobody that's more determined, either to find answers for themselves, so that they can be available to their families, so they can love their families in the way they want to, and be active and healthy. Or if they are dealing with someone in the family who needs help.

Another one I guess we haven't talked about recently, but that I came across, is kind of new and I don't even know the name of the company. But they are starting to bank stem cells from teeth. So that is a really interesting thing that doesn't have a lot of applications right now. But you know, they are taking just baby teeth as they fall out and preserving them. I guess it's like maybe you get a year, so-many-year plan, where they are keeping those so that later on they may have applications for supporting healing and all kinds of stuff.

Katie: Yeah. I love that you brought that up, because that is something that we're looking at. Like you said, some of the technology is there, but it's really new and still experimental. But they are pretty confident that within like five to ten years we can potentially be re-growing organs, and tissues, and even limbs from stem cells, which is mind-blowing.

And I know you and I have looked at -- and we will talk more about this in the future too -- but things like just platelet-rich plasma or using adult stem cells from your own blood or fat tissue, and how those applications can be done. I know people can do that for joint issues and they are even using it for traumatic brain injuries. We talked to a doctor who does that. So I think, while we are seeing so much right now, I think the next ten years are going to be mind-blowing in what the research shows. I think it's going to be awesome.

And before we move on, the flip side that I want to mention is variation. Because in the last couple of years that is what I really have gotten gentler on my stance on a lot of things. For instance, to start I think we should be looking at the common ground when it comes to health too, because I feel like it's become very polarized. There's all these camps of the keto, and the Paleo, and the vegan. And really, if you look at it, all of us who are interested in health, we have a lot more in common than we do different. And I think if we focus there, we can start making a lot of common ground into really supporting people in a healthier lifestyle, but I am coming to realize more and more the value of variation.

What I mean by that is I think a vegan diet can be super healthy for a short amount of time. I think there is a time and a place for that. At least for me personally, I don't thrive on a vegan diet, but spending a week on that sometimes I think is great, because it shifts things. It makes your body have to adapt. And that is what the research seems to be showing.

Certainly what I have found in my own life is you don't want to let your body adapt to anything, so you want to constantly be mixing it up. Like probably none of us should be eating the exact same foods every single day, over, and over, and over, no matter how healthy those foods are. And that is kind of why I experimented with fasting and different, like eating in shorter windows, or complete block-fasting, or skipping food one day a week, or eating less protein one day a week to kind of mimic fasting. There are so many ways to do that.

But I've just really, I guess, in the last few years softened to the idea that there is kind of a time and a place for a lot of these different modalities. And I think there's a time and a place for ketosis, for instance, but probably not every single day, unless you have a specific medical reason to do that. Same with a plant-based diet, which -- random tangent for a minute -- I would say all of us should actually be eating a "plant-based diet." We should add in other products to that, but really, we would all be healthier if 75% to 90% of our diet came from plants, no matter what the rest of it looks like. I mean, heck, even if the rest of it was McDonald's, you would still be healthier if 75% to 90% of it was plants.

So I love that personalization and variation are becoming so prominent and I am really excited and very hopeful to see what the next few years of research hold.

Heather: Yeah. And so, when you are saying, "variation," you are talking too about even within your own life, not variation within communities or just like people doing different things, but also in your own life. Like ideally, if we were eating seasonally, we wouldn't be eating the same thing all year. We would be picking up different micronutrient ranges throughout the year, because the soil is doing different things at different

times of the year.

Most of us don't really have the ability to fully eat seasonally. It's just really hard to accomplish, but life is that way too and life has its own cycles. I am starting to recognize that. I know that it's easy to sort of be like, "Well, I picked something up, and I did it for a while, and I enjoyed it, but then I stopped enjoying it, and now I'm a failure." But really, it is acknowledging that some things just have seasons and variation is okay.

I have cycled through all types of exercise that I enjoy and then I stop enjoying it. And then I need to pick something else up. And I used to just feel like, "Oh, I should have stuck with that." Like, you know, "Why be a quitter?" But it's okay. And who was it? I was listening to a podcast that you recommended and there was a guy who said he doesn't finish any books that don't interest him, that he doesn't feel obligated to finish every book, just because he picks it up. And I was like, "Wow."

I sort of do. I look at all those books that I pick up and I'm like, "Oh, I should read all of those." But really, if I picked up the main idea already, or maybe it didn't apply to that point in my life, it's okay to let those things go and to be okay with that, and to embrace variation as just part of life.

I think it's also too one of the mindsets that you and I are both trying really hard to instill in our children, which is like, "It's okay to try things and either fail at them, or decide, or try and keep overcoming, but that experiments are okay. You don't have to be guaranteed that it's all going to work out or that it's exactly the right path for you. You don't need to know that at the first step. It's okay to take a few steps and evaluate from there, experiment, test. If it falls apart but you still really want it, we will support you, and keep going. Or it's okay to adjust, pivot, all those things."

Katie: Yeah. I think that's a huge point. Because we know we learn more typically from failure or from adapting than we do from succeeding the first time. I know you and I have talked about that a little bit, but being naturally Type A and then being raised in the school mindset, it is easy to fall into the whole, "I must succeed at everything and I don't want to try it unless I am good at it the first time." But really, I think when you frame it like you just said, like as an experiment, versus something that must happen, I think you have a much more open mindset.

And I think that actually segues perfectly into something else we were going to talk about, which is movement. And I think variation and adaptation is perfect for that, because I am more and more convinced, when it comes to movement, I think we should all just mimic our children, for one, because they naturally do that. They don't like to be like, "Okay. So every day at 6 a.m., I am going to go to the gym and play Capture the Flag." They get obsessed with Capture the Flag for three weeks and then they get obsessed with climbing a tree or whatever. They are constantly adapting and their bodies never then just completely adjust to any kind of movement. They are constantly growing and changing.

I will say. I think movement is one area that I am still trying to find my groove on, just because I have tried so many different methods: kettle bells, and heavy weights, which I love, or cardio, which I don't love, but it's still good for you, all these things. And I feel like right now the research is pointing toward exactly like you said: doing what you love and changing it up a lot.

Because if you guys remember, I think it was maybe like six years ago now, the whole "sitting is the new smoking." And everybody was like, "Oh, gosh. Don't sit. Get a standing desk!" And then, I think last year

something came out which was like, "Uh, turns out standing all day is equally bad for you, so don't sit or stand, or do both." But really, what the message is: Don't do the same thing all day.

Heather: Right.

Katie: Mix it up. And so, in our house -- I think I have posted it on Instagram and talked about it -- but we have balance boards, and surf trainers, and squishy mats, and balls that we stand on, all these things just to mix it up, rather than be still. And I think that maybe is what it will take for me to find what I "love" with movement is never the same thing two days in a row, maybe.

Heather: Yeah, and that kind of goes to the other thing that we were talking about, which is community. So you and I currently have a pact, that we are going to go try as many weird things in the area, not weird, but like things we have never tried to sort of explore what it is that we like to do, what kind of things we enjoy. So we are going to try hot yoga and we are going to do Zumba. And I think there's a pretty wild class that we're going to try.

Some of the enjoyment for me is just coming down to getting together with friends, and getting out and trying something, and letting it be an opportunity to -- I don't know -- just have fun in a different way, like let loose. And then, we might be done with that and try something else. But there's a communal aspect too to movement. I feel like we have sort of set the ideal as like you go to a gym and it's this isolated experience, where maybe playing Frisbee is actually better for you in some regards than an hour of cardio, because you are spending time with your friends.

That is one thing that is consistent across all Blue Zones. When you're moving and you're also participating in a community -- it could be with your family; it could be with friends; it could be neighbors -- but when you are participating in community that there is something about that that creates health in and of itself, especially in the context of just activity.

Katie: Yeah. I think at the end of the day the community thing is probably something that is not enough of a focus for a lot of us and that it should be more so. And I know, like you just said, across all Blue Zones, that is what they have: community, and strong friendships and relationships with people close to them.

And we've lost that a lot in the modern world. For both of us there have been a lot of big changes recently. We have both moved so we are now in the same geographic area. That is about as much detail as we will share right now, just because we're also both pretty private and we want our kids to just be kids and have anonymity as much as possible. Not that we are people that anyone would try to find, but just we like to not be super clear about where we live.

But that was a big focus I think for both of us in decisions to move was finding a place where there was that community and where kids could be kids and have the freedom and independence to roam around, and to spend time in the woods, and to ride bikes, things that I feel like we had a little bit as a kid. And in a lot of places, that doesn't exist any more.

Heather: Yeah, that's true. It's both. It's community with us, as adults, but I think that is important for our kids to see. But I also do think that, for our kids specifically, we kind of felt like we wanted to -- I don't know --

almost bring back the '80s, because there was riding bikes, and there was the ability to test limits and learn independence. And things have shifted a lot now and it's a little...

I know that there was a law that was passed in Utah recently that kind of tried to define what parents can do, because a lot of parents were feeling hesitant to even let their kids test out certain types of independence, because they were afraid that they would get reported for being negligent. It's a tough situation for a lot of families right now.

I know that for us, we are seeking a place that our kids can learn skills and develop some independence, but in a way that we feel comfortable with, that has certain safeguards. But that communal aspect about giving them some freedom has been really important to me.

Katie: Yeah. I think, when you look at the data too, we know this from Blue Zones, but having those relationships in your same area, that is more important from a health perspective than stopping smoking, or exercising, or realistically, genetic testing, any of these other things we have talked about. At the end of the day, our relationships really are so important to our health and to the health of those around us.

And so, obviously we are all in different places and have different abilities to do that or not, but I think, no matter where we are, we can make a more conscious effort to build community. We can't just expect it to happen like it did maybe in the 1950s. You just had a built-in neighborhood, where you connected, or you had family close by. But I think we can all make small choices that really lend themselves toward more community and more time spent, maybe not in structured activities every single day, but just with people and having time together. I think that is a really important point.

Heather: Yeah, and you did some really cool things in your backyard. My kids wake up I would say at least a few days a week and ask if we're going to your house. And this is all about your backyard, so can you tell me... I think you've written about it. You just published a post...

Katie: Yeah.

Heather: ...on what you've done to create an environment that helps kids develop this kind of community with each other.

Katie: Exactly. So first of all, the answer should always be, "Yes." Whenever your kids ask if they are going to my house, just say, "Yes."

Heather: It's my oldest son, man, every time!

Katie: But just, that's been a big focus for us, realizing psychologically kids need things that I don't think I got enough of as a kid, because I'm still having to learn them. But just the ability to push their boundaries within safe limits. To be able to fall, not in a dangerous way, but to be able to fall and learn their limits, and learn their balance.

We train our limbic system by falling down, not by starting off perfectly balanced. Babies are the best examples of that. So we wanted to create a backyard that was more of a natural playground, versus just a swing set. So we have all kinds of things, like the trampoline, a slack line, a ninja line, which is like a monkey

bars, but bouncy and hanging from the trees, and higher up and harder. With the idea being obviously we want our kids to move, but we also want them to be able to challenge themselves and to learn the boundaries of their balance and their athletic ability, and then to push that.

Of course, they also do things like ride bikes and play in the neighborhood. That is the biggest gift of our new place where we are, that I think a lot of parents are on that same page and the kids kind of get the freedom to just roam in this collective pack of... It's like a bike gang. There's like 30 kids on bikes, but there's always a parent close enough by if something happens. There's the collective -- we call it the "Mom Brain" -- the collective mom brain.

Somebody is watching out once in a while, but they don't feel like we are hovering over them or helicoptering. So they are also learning really important skills, like how to work through when they disagree about the rules of a game, without a referee or an adult coming in and saying, "You do this. You do this. You have a timeout."

They actually have to work through that and say like, "If we are going to play a game together, how are we going to make sure everybody follows the rules? And what happens if somebody doesn't follow the rules? And do the rules adapt if that doesn't work?" They are having to figure all that out. I think that has been really amazing to see for them. Because I had that as a kid, but until recently my kids didn't. And so it's been really neat to see them have to go through those challenges.

Heather: Yeah, and it's not like...especially in that case, because we are kind of in a similar situation. And I will say to you. I had a swing set when I was growing up and it still blows my mind how much time our kids will spend outside in sort of an unstructured but structured kind of way, because you just put it out there. I guess there is more room for creativity if they're interpreting what it is. I don't even know what it is that they're doing out there, like Pirates one day or whatever, but I'm just amazed at how much time they will actually spend out there, just experimenting and testing things. It's really cool. They are like little, physical scientists.

The other thing is I think there is an assumption that when you allow kids time with each other to navigate those kinds of things, that is going to turn into "Lord of the Flies" or that the parents are stepping back and not being involved. But I guess in our experience, there's a lot of conversations going on behind the scenes, because these kids need feedback. When they get home they are like, "I don't know how to handle this."

They want to talk about their day, but you're giving them like a small, safe environment to test those relationships to figure out how to navigate them, to develop real things like empathy, because they are sort of experiencing the consequences of those reactions. If they don't handle a situation well, they get to see how that plays out, whereas if you protect them from seeing how that plays out, they may get older and they're not really aware.

It is kind of like the skinned-knee thing. You learn a lot from the mistakes you make. So you know, one of the things that we just notice in our own family is that it's not like those conversations aren't still happening. They are just happening differently, because the children are really...our kids are owing the problems a little bit more, because they are getting to experience them more fully. Because it is their experience that they're bringing to us, instead of us kind of circumventing those relationships. So it's been interesting.

We have just a really small neighborhood, so ours is not a pack of 30 kids! But still, it's been interesting and helpful to them I think.

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Katie: Absolutely. I think also we can learn so much from kids in general, but you've brought up another important thing, which is that ability to navigate. What I see more and more -- and it sounds like you are too -- is them coming in and realizing they have the power to impact the situation and that they have to take responsibility for it. When the parents aren't there to be the maker of the rules and the keeper of the peace, they then have to evaluate more. Like, "Okay. What did I do that played into that situation? And how can I make the situation better? What responsibility did I have in that?" Versus just expecting the adults to take care of it.

It reminds me of a book that I loved. I won't say the whole name, because we don't have an explicit rating, but "The Subtle Art of Not..." And if you want to read the rest, you will have to go to the show notes, but that was one of the key points in this book -- which I loved -- for adults. Which was that, even if it's not your fault, you should take responsibility for every single thing that happens in your life. He calls it even like, "extreme responsibility," because then you have the power to change it.

Whereas when we become the victim or expect someone else to solve the problem -- like in this case, children expecting us to solve their problem -- they lose their power to fix it. Whereas when they are in more of these free-play areas, they get to say like, "How can I fix the situation? Do I need to apologize? How can I make this better with the other person?" Versus always having that safety net.

So I think that is a huge point, that we are giving them that mental ability to work through things and to hopefully make the mistakes now at a younger age on smaller things, than when they are adults and it's friends that have been friends for life that they are going to mess up a friendship, or a job, or an entrepreneurial opportunity or something. They will hopefully have the social skills to navigate that instead.

And I think also a part of that with the community, obviously our families are our first community and I know that is an important thing for both of us, nurturing our family culture and making sure that our kids feel very much a part of something that they love. I think, to that note, the idea of family traditions and family culture is something that I think as parents we should be cognizant of and kind of plan around. And I would love for you to talk about the tradition side, because I know that you have written about that a little bit and you guys have

some fun things that you do as a family, that just build your family culture.

Heather: Yeah. So our traditions are actually changing and this kind of goes back to bio-individuality. Some of them are shifting, but we do have some traditions that we do throughout the year that create consistency. And then we also experiment a lot. So right now, my husband and the kids are getting up and doing a slow set of stretching session that kind of gets the day going.

And we listen to this... I don't even know the name. It's like a podcast where they break down one complex idea in five minutes. I can get it from my husband. He just throws it on and we make breakfast together. But these little things throughout the year, they create continuity and sort of a sense of who we are and what matter to us. So you know, we prioritize learning and we prioritize being together. And that as I said, some of them are shifting.

So one of our family traditions is to prioritize time together and travel. So there are a lot of things that we forego throughout the year in order to have a week together, where we experience something that is really amazing and kind of test ourselves against a different environment. And then, we have weekly traditions of things like waking up on the weekend morning and having a slow day. We like to have at least one slow day. So those kinds of things.

But you have done something that I think is really cool and I feel like maybe almost like drives the meaning behind what we are doing. That is you are creating a family mission. Or what would you call it that you are doing?

Katie: Yeah. We kind of named it our "family manifesto." I am going to write about it soon and share ours. But we thought about doing a family mission statement and I know a lot of people recommend that, and it just didn't feel actionable enough, if that makes sense. I felt like the word that fit for us was a "manifesto."

And so we sat down with the kids, and we brainstormed, and had them throw out... It was really interesting to see the words that they threw out for what described our family. The ones that came to mind first for them were things like "adventurers," and "explorers," and "climbers." Like the four year old, it was "hand-standers." And I'm like, "Well, I'm not very good at that one yet." But it was really cool to see the things that were important to them.

And so, we took all those words and drafted it into a paragraph that is more like a manifesto/creed, like it is an action-oriented thing, versus not just like how a mission statement might be. Like, "This family is..." It is very much like, "We are... This is what defines us." And so, there's lines like, "We are adventurers, explorers, and challenge-seekers, who are willing to take risks, and fail, and fall down, and apologize, because that is when you grow." Just things like that and I am working on trying to figure out how to artistically put that on a wall, so that it is in a prominent place to remind us, because it has become kind of a teaching tool in that sense.

When siblings fight, we can be like, "No, this is great, because when we apologize we grow and we learn from that," and just tying it back into that. And my hope is that that sticks with them when they eventually move on, which is hard to believe that is going to be in seven years for the first one. But hopefully that is something they will take with them and that will kind of guide their life. And hopefully, maybe with their own families, they will have their own version of it.

I just feel like it helps us to be more intentional. I think in life, especially as parents, you can just get swept up in the day-to-day and not really have the time and focus to be intentional in what you are trying to accomplish with your kids. Not that we do it well every day. We certainly don't, but we just try to keep the realization that, of all the work that we do and all the business that we build, and all this, that really our most important project in life is how we raise our children.

So the manifesto just felt like a very tangible way to bring them into the family culture and have us kind of like, "This is us. This is what we do. This is what we believe. And this is how that actually looks in our life."

Heather: I am curious to find out how my kids would answer that question, like asking them to help me come up with words. Yeah, I'm going to do that. It reminds me of another friend of ours. Their family motto is, "We were made to do hard things." I mean, it is their family motto, but I've never forgotten it, because just whenever they...

Because they are a particularly adventurous family and they have used that motto to kind of ease themselves through so many different circumstances and to make... It is almost like it makes being uncomfortable at times just a normal part of life, instead of something that you are trying to escape from or work yourself around. But I love that. I love that they have an identity that is so strong and now I want to go work on a manifesto.

Katie: I love that line too. I think we have all adopted that from these friends of ours. And I find myself telling my kids that sometimes.

Heather: Oh, yeah.

Katie: Like they get a skinned knee. Or even, recently someone in our extended family broke his leg. And it was really horrible when a child is in that much pain, but that was one thing I said to him. Like, "I know this is tough right now, but we were made to do hard things." And he actually stopped for a second and I could tell he thought about that.

I think another thing -- that kind of a theme -- but we can learn from children is that we should actually embrace challenge. And I think kids are naturally amazing at that. They don't shy away from it.

Heather: Right.

Katie: I think that really resonates with kids. But I can't wait to see what your family manifesto is too!

Heather: I'm sure that, one day when my kids are waking up and begging me to go to your house, that we will have plenty of opportunities to tell you about whatever words they have come up with!

Katie: Yes! Well, I guess to wrap up, we were going to talk about some random, obscure things that we have tried since the last episode. Definitely, the last episode we did was hard to beat, because we were at the Bulletproof Conference.

Heather: Oh, for sure.

Katie: And we tried all the random things. But, even if it is not as long of a list, we have tried some random

stuff since last time. So do you want to talk about the first one?

Heather: What was the random... Uh. Oh, yeah, so Escape Room and I think this is really fun. It's like being inside a giant puzzle, which is really cool. So, do you want to explain the concept behind it?

Katie: Well, I am sure there's different ways that they can be set up, but we did this with a group of friends, including our friends who say that we were made to do hard things. They basically lock you in a room. You have a certain amount of time; I think it's usually an hour. They don't really give you any instructions and they just say, "Figure out how to get out."

It's awesome, because you have no idea what you're starting with. You are scouring the room for clues and then trying to figure it out, but it's great for teamwork and just to challenge your brain. It was a blast. I think it was one of the most fun nights we have had in a really long time with a group of friends, just having to work together for a common goal in a super fun way.

Heather: Yeah, for sure. It is one of those things where you get to know each other in different ways, because people have different skill sets and they shine in things like that. And you might actually feel at times like you maybe don't have a skill set that fits, but you will. It's just this really cool thing, or any sort of difficult challenge; people come together and rise to it. We had a lot of fun and it goes back to community and building those relationships as part of overall health.

Katie: Yeah. I know something we both have said. "We should do that more often." It will be fun. Another one that I will be doing a whole podcast about soon is the idea of training the brain in different ways, specifically the lady I interviewed runs a company called, "Brain Harmony." It focuses a lot on children with any kind of developmental struggle, whether it be ADHD, or autism, or even more severe things, kind of like rewiring the brain for that.

But it's been really cool, because she has different programs that you can go through that help even just put you into a more sympathetic-parasympathetic balance, which that has been great for me to see. So that is one I will be delving into more, but something fun that we've tried recently.

Heather: Now, you said that they have two different types. There is one that is using bone conduction and then one that's not?

Katie: Yeah. So one is just sound. It is different sounds played to different ears at different times, with the idea of lighting up different parts of the brain and making them pay attention. And I was shocked how much you can be tired and starving from doing hard brain work. They say the brain uses more calories per volume or whatever than any other part of the body, but it really does work your brain really hard, which is fascinating.

And then the bone conductivity one is a little bit more advanced. Same concept, it is like wiring and targeting different parts of the brain, but also using the bone aspect to be able to hit different points.

Heather: Does it affect the vagus nerve, the bone conduction?

Katie: It does, yeah. Yeah. It's really fascinating. So I am interviewing her. But it's really neat to see. She has had amazing success with people: children who had autism, who recover drastically, or children with anger

issues, or non-verbal children, just amazing. She is one of the most patient people I have ever met. She calls everybody, "Friend." There's no patients in her clinic. There's just friends that come to visit and it is like a gigantic playground, but that teaches your brain things. So that was also some of the influence for our backyard. It's just I want it to be a playground that teaches your brain things.

Yeah. And then, the last one is fascia, fascia. We don't actually know how to say that, because this is the risk of being a blogger. We can read all the words, but then we have to say them out loud and we don't know how to say them.

Heather: Did I tell you how I wouldn't do a water kefir, kefir, kefir.

Katie: Kefir, whatever it is.

Heather: Right, because I even interviewed a bunch of different experts and I said, "How do you say it?" Nobody really agreed. Eventually I think the biggest one I got was kefir, but I couldn't do the video for like a year, because I was just afraid to say the word. Anyway, so, back to this fascia, fascia.

Katie: Yes. I've just been curious about it recently, so I've done some myofascial work. Hopefully I'm saying that right! But also just delved into the research on it and it's really cool. So the NES Health, the miHealth device that measures the body in different ways, like the energetic output of different organs, they also look at the fascia, because it's super... Like it's basically we think of it like a tough thing, but it's actually a very aqueous, liquid, very mineral-rich substance, and so it is highly conductive.

And so, electricity and energy can travel through it really quickly, but also -- we know from massage and from myofascial release -- it can become bunched in certain points. Or if you have had surgery, if you have had a C-section, you can get adhesions and it can become messed up there. Or even like cellulite they think is partly because of your fascia being bunched up. So it's just been something I have been researching a lot and trying different treatments to see what they do.

One I love is the MyoBuddy, which is kind of a mixture of myofascial release, and percussive massage, and heat. I think you tried it recently too.

Heather: Yes, it's really cool. My kids actually love it too. They beg for a massage before bed. We got a device for Christmas and it's been amazing. They really like it. I actually put it on their chest, trying to get a little bit close to the vagus nerve, and I find that it really calms them before bed.

Katie: Yeah. It's super relaxing. I think -- I mean, I still love regular massage -- but it's pretty close as far as relaxation for sure. So that is all our random stuff for this episode and we've been talking for 45 minutes, which is crazy. The time goes by so fast! But, now that we live in the same place and we have admitted that openly, we are going to be doing more podcasts together. So if you guys have anything you want us to specifically talk about, we would love to hear from you.

The show notes and everything we mentioned will be at wellnessmama.fm, or you can find this podcast on your app as well and you can get to it from there. But as always, thank you for taking the time, and for being here, and listening. And thanks, Heather, for being here. It's always fun.

Heather: Thank you for having me!

Katie: And I will hopefully see you/hear you next time on the Healthy Mom's 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.