

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

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 165: How to Make Simple Green Smoothies a Daily Habit (Even on a Tight Budget!)

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Healthy Moms Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and today's episode is gonna be a super fun conversation with a lot of practical advice for any moms listening especially, because I'm here with Jen Hansard who's the founder of Simple Green Smoothies. You've probably heard of it. It's a really popular website where over one million people have taken her green smoothie challenge and joined her community. And the Simple Green Smoothie lifestyle, what I love about it is, it does not involve cutting calories or eliminating an entire food group. Instead, it really encourages us to make one simple change, which is to drink one green smoothie a day. Also, Jen is the author of the really popular book by the same name, and her obsession with green smoothies has taken her into classrooms to do demos, to lead entrepreneur workshops, to speak on stage. And she has even been featured on the "Doctors." So, she's very well known. I can't wait to jump in. Jen, welcome and thanks for being here.

Jen: Oh, thank you, Katie. This is awesome. I'm so happy to be hanging out with you.

Katie: Likewise. And we got to talk on the phone at least once and it was such a fun conversation. So, I can't wait to just kind of let people in today as we get to chat some more. And I've heard part of it but I'd love if you could start with your kind of whole real food story. How did you get into green smoothies and into health in the first place? Because if you're like me, I'm guessing you weren't necessarily just born loving everything healthy, and maybe you had to kind of go through some struggles there. So, I'd love to hear your story.

Jen: Yeah. I mean, I was definitely a child of the '80s, and I grew up on Chef Boyardee, and loved my Lucky Charms and Cinnamon Toast Crunch and everything in that field, even though my mom would try to get me to eat better than that, but that's what I loved to have. And so, I like to say my wellness adventure started in 2012 and that was the time when my husband Ryan and I, we had just moved to Central Florida with our kids who...my daughter Claire was only one-and-a-half at that time and my son Jackson was three. And we moved

here from California so my husband could start a church because he was a brand new pastor. And this was the first job he got which was planting a church. And so, a job like this doesn't come with a salary. And it was up to us to fundraise, and we actually really suck at fundraising. And so we pretty much had nothing to live on.

And so, I was a stay-at-home mom up until then, but I had a degree in design, and so I used these skills to do random design jobs for anyone that would let me work with them. And it was a way to just scrap together some money so that I could help pay our rent, pay the groceries, just so that we could continue to build this church out of our living room. And then one day while we're doing this, we got a letter in the mail, and it said we no longer had health insurance. And I knew this was coming because, I mean, we had just left his job in LA which was in the studios. He worked for Hollywood. We had great celebrity insurance, is what we called it, and then we left all that to start this church, with no income, no health insurance or anything. And it eventually ran out but it came at a time when we weren't ready for it to, and we couldn't afford to buy health insurance.

And so, I just knew that I had to do something about it, and that if my kids were to get sick at this point, it would put us under. Because if we walked into the ER without any insurance, the bill would be astronomical, and it would take anything we have left. And so I went on Google and I was looking into like, "How do you keep your family healthy? How do you boost your immune system?" And pretty much three things kept popping up, and one was, like, live in a bubble. And, like, literally, it was like do not touch shopping carts. Do not put your kids in classes because that's where they get sick, no preschool, things like that where they were pretty much telling you to isolate yourself so that you didn't get sick. And that just couldn't work for us.

And then the other option I read about was taking vitamins and supplements, just to make sure that you're getting in your daily dose of vitamins to keep your immune system strong. But vitamins cost money, and when you have a family of four and you're doing this, it's not a cheap thing to do. And we didn't have much to live on already so we couldn't go this route. And also, like, I literally gag when I swallow a pill. And so, I knew that if I couldn't do it, my, like, one-and-a-half year old wasn't even gonna be able to do it either, even the chewies because I'm not a fan of those.

And so, the third option I found which was really the saving grace, was drinking green smoothies. And this was something that kept coming up as much as I was pushing it off the internet because they looked disgusting, and I didn't drink spinach, I didn't eat spinach. I sometimes would go to the store... Like, this is mom confession right here. My mom's group in LA was pretty healthy and they shopped at Whole Foods and I wanted to be like that.

And so, when we lived in California, we had more money, and I remember going into Whole Foods to get my coffee. And then I was like, "I will get a bag of spinach." And so I buy the spinach, bring it home. I had no clue what to do with it. And so, it literally went bad in the bag, in the drawer, and then I just tossed it out. And I was like, "That was a waste." And so, green smoothies were not something that naturally stood out to me as a good option, but it was crazy because right after I kept seeing them. They were, like, constantly on my radar. My friend Jada reached out. We were talking about doing some parenting newsletter design together because I was the designer, and she was starting her own newsletter company. And so I was talking to her, and she was saying how she was drinking green smoothies. And I was like, "Really?" Like, "Why are you drinking them?" And she said it was to lose the baby weight that she still had after a couple years after Zoe was born, and that it was really helping her. And they actually tasted good, is what she said. And if a friend of mine could vouch that they tasted good, that resonated so much with me.

And so, I immediately went to the grocery store with my kids. I took them with me because I wanted them to be a part of this experience. We got bananas, we got a bag of spinach, we got the blueberries, the strawberries that were on sale. And we went home and I threw all this in our old blender that we just had from years and years of moving and I kept it. And I had to dust it off, of course. And we threw everything in it and blended it up with some orange juice. And I remember the kids, like, staring at it with me and we're all like, "How are we even gonna do this?" We just put, like, two cups of spinach in a blender and how is this even gonna taste good.

But we all poured it into our cups. My husband had his too. And I remember cheering my daughter's sippy cup against mine, and just, like, praying that they liked it. And literally, we chugged it down and they were so happy they asked for seconds. And I don't know about you but for a mom, like, who's struggling already and it's hard to even get your kids to want to eat any vegetables, to have them ask for seconds when it came to smoothie with spinach, like, I felt like I won the gold medal at the Olympics. Like, it was like a huge victory to me. And so, I was like right then and there, I was like, "If I can't do anything else but drink a daily green smoothie with them, we are good to go because that's vitamin straight into our body. That's also a meal too. So, we're able to nourish ourselves and get our breakfast out of the way in one hit." And so I really wanted to make that work. But the problem was it does get expensive. Like, Katie, as you know, buying fresh fruits and vegetables does cost money, and it can make it extra tight on your finances.

And so, I was trying to figure out how I could still afford to do this as we kept getting less and less financial stability. And I found out about a program called WIC, and this is for women, infants, and children, and it's through the government. And they help subsidize groceries for your family if you hit a certain income, and we actually qualified for that. And so I was honestly thrilled to hear that, and a couple days later Ryan and I, we went to the WIC office. And I remember just sitting there with the kids and we're waiting to hear, like, all this...how it works, and how we qualify, and how to get started with this. And it just hit me like this, I was like, "We don't belong here. We have three college degrees between the two of us."

My husband has his bachelors, he has a masters, and I have two bachelors. And we grew up middle-class LA suburbs with the stay-at-home moms and breadwinner dads, and, like, my parents would be shocked to know that we're in this situation about to get government assistance. But I remember sitting right across from me there was this lady, and she was there too with her kids. She had two toddlers and a newborn, and there was her little girl playing with her little sister's hair. And I remember looking at this mom and just being like, "You know what? We're in the same boat. We are both exhausted. We are so worried about our families staying healthy and growing up to be incredible people of the world. And all we're trying to do is make one good choice." Like, "Neither of us are here for a handout." Like, "Yes, times are super tough right now and we will take this little help that we can get just to get us back on our feet, and get to a better place." And so we got up to the counter. Ryan and I were there and they handed us our vouchers and they taught us how to use them, how to go to the grocery store and which foods you could buy, like, whole wheat bread. We had a certain amount that we could spend on fruit and vegetables. Also cereal, things like that. And that six-dollar WIC voucher that we could use for fruits and vegetables is what kept us doing green smoothies every day.

So, we would use it to buy our spinach, we would use it to buy strawberries when they're on sale, bananas, things like that where it just lightened the burden on us to where we could sustainably do this was amazing. But it wasn't easy, and I was embarrassed. And I remember being in the grocery store line and when you get to the end of that checkout and you pull out your WIC checks, people behind you would sigh and roll your eyes. And it took a long time to get through the checkout, and so people were just frustrated. And it was

humiliating. And so, I would go there early in the morning, as early as I could, just so I didn't see anyone that I knew or there wouldn't be any lines because I was embarrassed. But I knew that I was gonna keep doing it because it was working and my family was getting healthy, we were feeling better. I was getting crazy amounts of energy and no one was getting sick. And so, something was working right with these green smoothies and no matter what, I was gonna keep it up.

So, with these green smoothies, like, I really started to feel not just good enough, like, I started feeling great. Like, I'd wake up and I'd have energy that I had not had since I was in college. Like, once you have little kids, you're exhausted all the time. Like, it seems like the only thing that would get me excited was another cup of coffee. But then when I started drinking the smoothies, it changed that and I had energy. And I was like, "Yes, let's go play. Let's go outside. Let's go make a special breakfast." Like, all these things that I wanted to do, I could actually go after and do now. And one of the things that I had missed since having kids was running. And running was a big part of my life growing up. I've been a runner since I was in third grade. Like, our school had programs, I was in cross-country. I ran marathons in college to raise money for the Leukemia Society for my dad who went through cancer.

And so, running was just part of me, but I had let it go after I had kids because there was no time for it, and I didn't have the energy. But because of the green smoothies, one a day, getting in my vitamins, I was able to run again. And so, we felt like something was finally working for us. Even though we still didn't have money, we at least had our health and were heading in the right direction. And then all of a sudden the church closed down, and we had just moved 2,500 miles from Los Angeles to Florida to do this, and leave our family and our friends. And for it to shut down was really hard on us. But one of the other pastors, he had a serious medical condition, and that caused the church to fall apart pretty much. And so, my husband and I were devastated and we were, like, "Do we move back to California?" Like, "Do we start looking for another job at a church?" Like, "We need money. We need something to work out so that we can get out of our current financial situation."

And so we prayed. I remember my prayer that day was that there had to be a way for me to make enough money that I could support our family so that my husband, as a pastor, he could choose any job he wanted. And that we wouldn't choose it for the pay but we chose it because it was where God called us. And so we prayed for that, and I kid you not, Katie, like, literally, it was...I wanna say within that week is when Jada and I, who the girl that introduced me to green smoothies, we started talking about writing a green smoothie recipe book together because she was just as obsessed with them as I was. And we really complemented each other well as far as me with my design skills, her with her marketing enthusiasm. And so we decided to go for it, and she started posting recipes on Instagram. And I started building out our Wordpress website where we'd put the recipes there too. And before you knew it, like, hundreds of thousands of families just like ours were falling in love with green smoothies. And women around the world were reaching out to us, saying, like, "Thank you so much for these recipes. They are so delicious. My kid is obsessed with them. My husband will drink them."

And we realized we found something that was empowering others to make healthy changes too, and all it was was one simple habit. And looking back now six years ago, I was on WIC. And now today, I'm the CEO of Simple Green Smoothies. And so, it's incredible what you can do when you start drinking a daily green smoothie. And that is pretty much my story.

Katie: That is so cool. And I feel like there are so many commonalities, just like overlap in our stories. We had that same kind of financial tough time after our third son. My husband actually left his job that year under pretty tough circumstances right as we were about to have a baby. So, this was like a few weeks before...about five weeks before we were due. And I remember thinking, like, "Okay. Well, at least we have like five weeks to figure something out." And that was the night that I, like...or, a couple nights after that, was the night I woke up and was like, "Oh, gosh. I think my water broke." And it was actually I was hemorrhaging because I had placenta previa. And so then, of course, it was a c-section and he was in the NICU. And it was a very long recovery, not to mention, like, the original bill from the hospital was like \$150,000 or something insane. I totally can sympathize with being in that place of like, just like, "What do we actually do? And what is our next step?" And also still having that, like, really strong desire to make sure you keep your family healthy, and for us too with him as a preemie. And we had to be really careful with his immune system for those early months.

And so I just sympathize so much with your story. And I'd love to talk a little bit more about the budget side because, like I said, that was part of our story. We still eat on a food budget, and we always have. We have a little bit more leeway in our food budget now, thank goodness, but there were times when I was buying just like the frozen vegetables at the store and stretching everything as much as I possibly could because that's all we had. And I'd love to hear any tips that you have because, certainly, I get emails from other moms. And everyone would agree with your statement, it is, unfortunately, a little bit more expensive to eat real food. But I think that...like, your message explained so well it's also so doable. So, I'd love if you could kind of talk us through some of your best strategies for incorporating that and in vegetables, into all aspects of life. Like, green smoothies are such an awesome starting point but I feel like there's easy ways to get veggies in every meal on a budget. So, I would love to hear your tactics.

Jen: Yeah. So, I mean, budgeting is super important to me. Like, I try not to be in debt and I wanna have the power to do the things I want and not be held back by finances, but sometimes the reality is we can't afford things. And so, for us, at that time, really, what I did was I made the same green smoothie over and over. And by doing that, it allowed us to buy it in larger portions. And so, we could get like a big... When bananas were on sale, we would buy a ton of them and then chop them and freeze them. So, you're batching them out and having a surplus in storage. And the same with fruit. Like, frozen fruit, when it goes on sale, I just buy that stuff up like crazy. And really just keeping consistent with the smoothie that I make or the foods that you eat as far as vegetables so that you can buy them in larger quantities really is a great way to save.

And so, now like Costco, any, like, wholesale place like that is a great way to save money after you pay your membership cost. Like, it will give you savings time and time again. I think there's a lot of way...like, you can do couponing but it's usually not for fresh food. So, I never got into the couponing piece of it. But what I get excited about is shifting the budget. And so instead of focusing on how can I get food at the cheapest price possible or even healthy food at the cheapest price possible, I think what other areas of my life can I start changing so that I have more money to spend on food? And for me, food is not just fuel for my body, even though it's a good portion of it, but it's also nourishment and it's really kind of like our preventative care that we can do so that we're not paying medical bills down the road.

So, I see my food budget being such a huge part of our family budget because it fills so many buckets for us. And so, when we were really struggling, one of the things we realized was we were spending a lot of money on gas. And that was one area we're like, "Let's figure out how to cut down on this." And so we made it a game, and Ryan and I made a pact together that we would not drive anywhere that was within, I think it was a mile-

and-a-half of our house. No, it was three miles. Three miles of our house, we wouldn't use our car, or a truck is what we had then. We would bike. And so our kids were, at that point, we just moved, they were two and three-and-a-half. And so we had a bike trailer we got on Craigslist. And our grocery store was a mile from our house and we literally biked to grocery shopping. We would bike to the mall where we would hang out and do the train table at Barnes & Noble's, everything. The park was within a mile and a half.

So, we would bike to all these places and save a lot of money on gas through that. Or it would also help us to see maybe we don't need to drive there because we can put this money towards food if we save it from the gas bill. So, for us, that was a huge piece of it. We also did a whole year where we didn't buy anything new. So, I guess, for me, like, I kind of like seeing budgeting as a game, and it's a challenge, and an adventure. And it's not something that's preventative or like hard on us. It's something we look forward to doing. And so our game of buying nothing new for a year was that for us. So, we made a pact where we'd buy nothing new, everything was secondhand, and we did that all year where we would shop at the thrift store and get the things we needed.

We'd use Craigslist. My whole house was furnished through Craigslist like three years ago, and that saved us a ton of money on clothes, on furniture, all that stuff. There was one time, though, I will say, that we were at Disney...I think it was at Disneyland. We were visiting family and they got us tickets to Disneyland to celebrate. And we get there and we realize our son does not have shoes on his feet. And we're like, "Crap. What are we gonna do?" And we looked around for thrift stores but they weren't open that early. And so we went to Target and we bought him a pair of shoes. So we did break the pact one day just so we could get into Disney World, or Disneyland and have that good time with them.

Katie: Oh, my goodness. I feel like every mom can sympathize. Like, we've definitely shown up, I think, at church with a child with no shoes before, and several places. I forget the rest of them but, yeah, it's definitely happened.

Jen: Yeah.

Katie: I think that's like you bring such great points about budgeting and prioritizing. I feel like that even relates to like busyness in today's world. It's kind of a tangent but it's almost like people relate busyness as like a badge of honor in a sense. And so often if I ask someone how they are, the answer I get back is, "Busy." And I had someone say to me recently like, "Busy is a choice." And it just is about your priorities. And so, same with real food. It's a choice and it's about your priorities. And having lived through very tough financial times like you have as well, I can say, like, it certainly isn't easy but it is still possible. Like, just like you made it work. And I think the other side of that that I'd love to hear your perspective on is how are you really building the habit of getting kids to eat or drink, in your case, healthy and internalize that themselves? Because that's a question I get from a lot of moms who are like, "My kid doesn't like vegetables. They don't wanna eat this. They won't eat this." How do you approach that in your family?

Jen: Yep. So, we start always with, "Let's try this." It's never something like, "You have to have this." It's like, "Okay. I really want you to try this. What do you think?" And so then, really, it puts the power on them to have an opinion in the matter, and they're willing to at least give it a lick or give it a bite, and then weigh in and let you know what they think. And then from there, like, my son is so opinionated. It's such a blessing because he really thinks things through and knows what he would change in it. And so, with food, we'll do that. I'll make a recipe and be like, "Hey, what do you think of this?" Like, sweet potato hash cakes. And he'll try it and he'll be

like, "Uh, it's not bad but it's not good, Mom. I would add a little maple syrup," or something like that or something to make it sweeter. And I'll be like, "Okay. Let's do it."

And so I'll adjust my recipes to where that they'd weigh in too. And so they have meat in the game and then they're willing to, like, keep eating too from that. So, that's helped us a lot. Also, I would say another thing is, I enjoy this food and I don't eat it for deprivation because I'm trying to be healthier, trying to be on a diet. I eat it because it really changed my life and it allows me to do the things I love to do. And so, my kids see that, people around me see that. And when I come to the park, like every Sunday, we play volleyball after church. And I started bringing green smoothie popsicles that I freeze the night before, and I bring them for everyone to try. And I'm just so excited to like come out there with them, and everyone is just excited because I'm excited. They don't even know if they're gonna like it or not. But I think it's the excitement and enthusiasm of food that really gets people to be willing to try it, even kids.

Katie: That's such a good point. And I'm curious if you have any, like, food rules or guidelines in your family or how you navigate th,e like if the kids are at a party or Halloween. Or, like, instances where typically they are not associated with really good food. How do you guys navigate that?

Jen: Yeah. Well, when my son was two, he had a food sensitivity to corn, and it was so bad that any time he would eat it, it would trigger massive inflammation. He would get tons of boogers, tons of coughs, and ear infections, and his stomach would hurt too. Like, it was crazy how sensitive he was. But he wasn't allergic, because we did an allergy test and it did not pick up on it. So, that's why it's so important to do testing for sensitivities because it can teach you a lot about your kids. So, for us, eating things with corn in it, which is corn syrup, dextrose, even just corn, like anything like that. I mean, pretty much everything in America has a corn-base that's processed. And we knew that just even a piece of it would make him sick. And so, at parties when he was really little, I was just adamant like, "We can't eat that. Like, he'll get sick." It was hard but we knew it was for his health and he was okay with it because he knew he did not like how he felt when he ate that stuff. But now, I mean, he's pretty much outgrown that sensitivity. He's 10 years old now.

So, I let both of them. My daughter Claire is eight. When we go to parties, it's their choice because I'm not...I don't wanna be the mom that's always telling them, "No." I want them to make the choices on their own. And so when they're at our house, we try to have healthyish food, not perfect. Like, we still kind of balance that line between super clean and also convenient, but it has to have nutrients in it. Whereas at a party, there's very little nutrients but there's a lot of color. And I let them choose. I would say they're pretty good. Like, if they do have a cupcake, they can't even eat the whole thing anymore. Like, it makes their stomach hurt. And so, my daughter licks the frosting off and says she's good with it. My son really prefers fruit over anything at a party. I give him a bowl of fruit and he's happy to go. So, I let them have the power in that and choose.

Katie: I feel like we're similar on that too because, like you said, I kind of look at it now. Like, we have had food rules that we kind of used to encourage the kids to try new foods. And it's like we'll try to get them, like you, to try one bite or one sip, and explain why foods are good for you or bad for you and how they interact with your body. I think that's a big key, is a lot of people don't realize kids are so smart and they can pick up on that so well, that if they understand it, you often will be shocked how good of choices they'll make on their own.

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blends at really affordable prices. I also love that they offer bigger sizes of many oils so I can order our favorites in 100-milliliter bottles and they last longer, and then I throw fewer bottles in the recycling each month. Many of you also know that not all essential oils are safe to use on babies and small children, and that certain dilution ratios should always be followed. Plant Therapy takes the research and guesswork out of this, since they work with Robert Tisserand, who is the author of "Essential Oil Safety," to make sure that all of their kid-safe oils are truly safe for kids. They are offering a 10% discount to "Wellness Mama" listeners and you can grab the discount by using the code WELLNESS10, all one word, WELLNESS10, at wellnessmama.com/go/pt. That's wellnessmama.com/go/pt for Plant Therapy.

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Katie: But these days I kind of look at it similar to how you said, as the division of responsibility is when they're at our house, my responsibility is to provide nutrient dense food for them and that's what we have in the house. We don't have the junk. But when they're out somewhere, like their responsibility is to eat when they're hungry and to learn how to listen to their body. And if they make the choice to eat something at a party that I wouldn't feed them, like, that is their decision. I don't wanna create a child who leaves home one day and then just wants to eat all the junk food because they could never have the junk food. So, I feel like those are great opportunities for them to get a little bit of a stomachache and learn, like, "Okay. That didn't make me feel good. And it's not because Mom and Dad said so, it's because I actually don't feel good," and to learn that way. And I feel like you're kind of exactly on the same page there.

Jen: Yeah. I think we're in this together, Katie. And it's funny because I didn't think I would be like this. Like, four years ago, I thought I was gonna be super strict and being like, "No. We're not eating this junk because it's not good for us." But, you know, there's something beautiful, even for me, that happens when I eat a Sour Patch Kid. Like, it brings me back to my childhood and, like, sitting in the movie theater, watching "Free Willy," and getting out my fanny pack and sucking on those candies. And there's joy in that for me. And I'm okay with making that choice every once in a while, to choose something that's not gonna really help my body but it's gonna give me a moment of happiness and my brain to remember certain things in my childhood or just to, like, be present in the moment with my kids when they wanna have a treat like that. So, for me, it's worth it.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And another thing I'd love to talk with you about, because I feel like you do it so well, is just incorporating movement and activity into your life, and into your family. I would definitely wanna hear your story about your recent big run that you conquered, because I was following you on Facebook the whole time. I was like, "Oh, my gosh, is she gonna do it?" But I feel like you guys have done great about making movement part of your family culture. Even the biking to the store, like, how awesome would that be if more of us could do that? But can you just kind of talk about how that is such a big part of your life, and definitely tell your story of your run?

Jen: Sure. Yeah, I mean, I've always been an athlete. So, I was a runner since I was a kid. I've done sports. I've really enjoyed it. Like, I've never been great at any sport though. I'm good enough to keep playing, and I really just enjoy the teamwork and the friends that you make through it. And I knew I wanted this for our kids too. And so, Ryan and I have always been very athletic, hiking, doing traveling together where you need to make sure your body is in good enough shape that you can enjoy the trip that you go out on. Like, we did a month in Europe backpacking, and I was like, "I wanna feel strong enough to be able to carry this backpack for a whole month and not hate myself for it," or, "My back is gonna give out." So, for us, being active is more about just doing it so that our body is strong enough to do the things we want to do. And running is just...it's my sanity. So, I choose to run as much as I can, and right now I'm not doing that great in it. I probably run one to three times a week, on like a max week.

But for me, it's not just pushing myself to get out there, it's I actually enjoy what happens to my brain, the endorphins, the vitamin D I'm getting. And so, being outside is like a non-negotiable for me. Like, a lot of people choose the gym, but for me, that doesn't help me with the happiness piece of it. I have to be outside to get that. So, for our kids, I think we just really, like, lived this life ourselves of being active that they just follow in our tracks. And my son loves to play baseball, and so we've always been encouraging him to sign up for the next season, or like, "Let's go to the park and play." And so we find the things that they love to do, and then we just bring them along and invite them to do it more and more.

And my daughter right now, she's like hardcore into gymnastics. And for a while, it was between gymnastics and dance. I'm like, "Okay. You have to pick one and stick with it for a while." And I'm so glad she did gymnastics because it has just given her so much body confidence, and body awareness. And like, she is so proud of her strength and, like, flexibility. And it's just neat to see her and encouraging her and, like, being there as she's doing those amazing things. And so, now we should talk about the run.

Katie: Yes. Tell the story. It's amazing.

Jen: Yeah. Okay. So, I have a great friend, Karissa, who her and I, we've been running buddies for years, and it goes off and on. Like, I don't run 365 days a year. Like, I do seasons of it. And so, it usually takes me to sign up for something to commit to running again. So, kind of like when you wanna eat healthier, you have to kind of set a goal with it. So, for me, when it comes to running, my goal was always some sort of race, and sometimes it's a race you pay for. Other times, I'll set up a race where me and Karissa run to a Mexican food restaurant. It's 21 miles to the Mexican food restaurant. So, I'm like, "If we can make it there, we can have the best Mexican food in Florida." And so we do it. And like, those goals get us trained up and ready to go for our big event. But last year, it was in December I got a text from Karissa and she said, "Hey, I'm thinking of signing up for a 100k race. What do you think?" Like, my heart jumped and I was like, "This is awesome." Like, 100k in 62 miles, and the farthest I had ever gone before that was a 50k, which is 32 miles...31 miles. And so, knowing that we could double it just seemed amazing.

And so, I said, "Yes," right there. I made a little plan. The thing was we only had, I think it was six weeks to train. So, I knew we weren't gonna hit any world records for speed or anything like that. But I knew we could at least accomplish it and have done it. And that's really, it's an experience for me. Like, I don't need to win anything. I just wanna go through the experience, push my body, see what it's able to do, and be outside. And so, we signed up. We were training. I am not the best at training.

Some days I just would rather sleep in. And so I didn't do the proper training that I had planned for, but I still showed up that day. And I got up at 4 a.m., got to the start line, in the dark, and we were having record freezing temperatures in Florida that day, where it was...I think it was 27 degrees when we started the run. And I know people up north would be like, "That's a great day." But for us Floridians, like, we are not used to that kind of weather. I wore three jackets. I had gloves on, I had two hats, I had two pairs of socks, and we took off. And Karissa and I, we started doing these giant 10-mile loops in the forest. It's called Croom National Park, and we're out there running the trails, lap after lap. And after the first lap, I'm taking off clothes because it's getting hot. And then you start to sweat but the sweat starts to freeze on your clothes. And so then you're shivering out there.

And so I finished the next lap and come in...I brought green smoothies. So, I'd drink my smoothies. I'd eat my almond butter and jelly sandwich, and then I would have to change all of my clothes, like out there in the open. Yeah. It was pretty, pretty open. And just put on all dry clothes to be able to go out there and do another lap so my muscles wouldn't freeze up. And like Katie was saying, like I did this for 18 hours, and each lap just kept getting longer and longer. And eventually, my legs, like, I had no flexibility in them. Like, I couldn't even bend over. Like, my hamstrings were so dang tight and I was just so tired and just wanted to go to bed. And it was about 10:00 at night. Yeah, it was probably like 9:30, 10:00, after 15, 16 hours of running. And I told Ryan...he decided to do a lap with me and I told him, "Just so you know, this is my last lap. I'm done. Like, I don't need to finish. I feel like I've already become a champion because I've gone further than I've ever gone before."

And so, I was prepping him to let me stop here because I was so tired and my heart wasn't in it anymore. Like, I was done. And he was like, "Okay. Are you sure, Jen? Is this really what you want?" And I was like, "Oh, I'm sure. This is it. Don't try to talk me into it. I'm done." And so, we got back to the end, and I'm like ready to take off my clothes, get changed again, and, like, go to bed. We had friends that showed up to, like, cheer me on because they were watching on Facebook Live too. And they were like, "What, you're not done. Come on. You can do this." And I'm like, "No, really, you guys. Like, I hurt so bad." My whole body just ached. Like, I could barely even move my legs. They were so stiff. It was like an old man walking, is what I felt like. There's just no flexibility, nothing happening.

One man whose name is Keith Drury, he's hiked the Appalachian Trail with his wife. And he goes to our church and he's been just a huge encourager for me. I think he's 65 years old, maybe 70. I think he's 70. He said, "Well, I'm gonna do this last lap with you. Come on. We can do it." And I started crying. Like, I'm gonna cry right now because he wanted me to do this so bad that he was willing to be out there at 10:00 at night in freezing temperatures, and walk a 10-mile lap with me if that's what it took. And then my husband was like, "I'm gonna do it too." And like, two or three other people said they were coming with me. And then that's when I realized, like, this wasn't about me. Like, sure, I wanted to give up. Like, my heart was done, but my friends and family were in this with me, and they weren't gonna let me give up right now.

And so, I cried as I went back out there because I did not wanna do it, but I was like, "I'm gonna do this, you guys, for you." And we did it. We walked the last lap, middle of the night. It was so quiet out there. There was like no one on the trails because, I mean, not many people make it that far. They don't complete it or we're so spread out. And it was just so special for me to know that I had so many people in my corner. And that when I gave up and I couldn't do it, that others came alongside me and got me through it. And so, I can proudly say I'm 100k finisher now because of them.

Katie: Wow, that's amazing. And I think you've highlighted something really important there, which is the value of community, and also the value of hard work. One of my dear friends, they're a couple and they have five kids. And one of the sayings they always tell their kids when the kids are like, "I can't. It's hard," they're like, "We were made to do hard things." And I just love that phrase. We've taken it and use it in our family as well. And I feel like your story is a great example of that but also of the community aspect. And I know this is something that's important to you as well, and it's not necessarily just about green smoothies or health, but I'd love to talk about this for a few minutes because the last few years I've just become more and more convinced, like, yes, we should all be doing the right things for our health and sleeping enough. And eating and drinking good foods, and making sure we're nourishing ourselves. And getting vitamin D and time outside, but also that community piece, that like having strong relationships and friendships and community around us, it's easy to underestimate how important that is.

But truly, it is actually one of the most important things we can do for our health, our mental health, our physical health. In fact, like, I'm a statistics person, so when looking at the stats. Like, having strong community is actually more important for your health than quitting smoking. It's like more important for your health than exercising. Like, it's that important. So, I'd love to hear, like, how you implement community in your life and anything that you found that helps to kind of build that, because I feel like that's an often overlooked piece but it's so important.

Jen: Mm-hmm. Yeah. No, I think everything you said was spot on, and I'm like, "Yes, I agree." Have you done the Strength Finder test, by any chance?

Katie: I have.

Jen: Okay. So, I'm an Includer. And I think Includers like to always think about other people and how they can kind of play into situations. And I think that's a big piece of why community is so important to me, is that I like to include other people in my life, in my experiences, and I don't have a problem asking them to be a part of it. And so, for us, when we moved to Florida, we moved to a town where we knew no one. And we had lived in LA our whole lives with both of our parents, all of our friends, our college friends, family, like brothers and sisters. Everyone was there. And then we just literally packed up, sold everything and drove across country to this town where we had one friend who was a pastor, and his wife. And it was hard because I felt so alone in that I had no one I could count on that lived by me. And so, I really quickly decided that I was gonna find my new family, that I was, "If I can't have family here, my friends are gonna become my family."

And so, when I start connecting with people and we hang out a couple times, I can kind of feel out, like, if we're gonna get along enough to where we can trust each other, and then I really do open up. I think you have to be vulnerable and share who you really are and stop the hype and being perfect for people to connect with you and want to be a part of your life too. So, for me, that's a huge piece of it, is we're always inviting people to our messy house to have meals. We're always out in public half-dressed. Like, my hair is never done. Only on camera for SGS. But for the most part, I am not a very proper person. And even sometimes on SGS, I do Facebook Live like totally chill. So, I think to be a community you have to be your true self. As messy and unwanted as you feel, that is exactly who you're made to be, and people are yearning for that.

And so, if that's physical, it can also be online. And for me, with Simple Green Smoothies, we have created an incredible community that is built on love, and encouragement, and building one another up instead of putting each other down. So, when it comes to food even, we celebrate the things you eat. And, yeah, when

you make the choices that aren't so good for you, we're really passionate about saying like, "It's okay. Let it go, move on. Get back on the bandwagon. We're still moving on, you guys. Like, let's do this together." And I hosted a 21-day cleanse and there's a lot of programs out there that you can buy and go through on your own. But for me, it's so important that there's a live community aspect to our programs that people can join and do together. And it's important that you start on the same day so that you are going through the same experiences because that's how you connect and bond. And every day someone has a hard time, and they share, and then five other people jump in and will lift you up, just like they did on the run for me.

So, just surrounding yourself with people who have the same mission as you, even though they may look different, they may do it different, but they're on the same goal of making the world a better place, being a better person, trying to change the world. Then if you surround yourself with people like that, you're gonna get further than you were before.

Katie: Absolutely. And I feel like it's such an important thing to model for our kids right now, living in a world where everything seems so divided at times. And with social media, it's like easy to fall into that trap of thinking everyone's life is perfect, and you only see the highlight reels. But we have such a human need for that vulnerability and that real connection and that, like, ability to actually be seen as we really are, and not to have to keep up those appearances. And I think as parents especially, it's so important for us to be an example of that for our kids. And to create it, because I feel like, in a social media world like we have today, it's easy to just think you have community because you have a lot of friends on Facebook or you interact with people on Instagram. But it's not the same thing as even if it's online, having actual interaction.

And I loved that you had to kind of create your community too, because I've done that several times. Where we used to live, I didn't know anyone when we moved there, and I didn't have any friends. And I kind of picked people like at church that I kind of knew who they were. I knew they had about the same amount of kids and was like, "Hey, let's go out to dinner and just hang out." And it ended up becoming this mom's night that still goes on to this day, and I go back for it sometimes. And we have really close friendships because of it. And the same thing now where we live, it's like finding those people and choosing them, and then putting in the effort to build that community and to build that group around you. And they don't have to be close either, like geographically. Like, we have friends that we get together with a couple times a year. And now a couple of us live in the same place, but until recently, we lived all over the world.

Like, one was in Canada, one's in California, one in Michigan. Like, we're just all over. But we made it a priority that we're gonna get together with our kids and have community. And those things truly change your life to be able to have those kind of friendships. So, I love that that's important for you. I knew it was a value for you as well and I'm glad we got to talk about that.

Jen: You never know what we're gonna talk about on here, right?

Katie: Exactly. I also wanna make sure we have time to talk about your new book, because your first book, your "Simple Green Smoothies" book was obviously a huge hit and really popular. And now you have a sequel coming out, from what I understand. So, can you give us the low down on that?

Jen: Yes. I am so excited about this book because pretty much as soon as I started drinking green smoothies, I started craving healthier foods throughout my life. Like, I didn't just want the green smoothie now. I actually wanted to eat salads, which I hated salads growing up. So, I was kind of like, "Who am I?" But I wanted them

to taste good. And so I spent years and years of trying out recipes, tweaking them, making them really focused on this plant-based lifestyle that I love so much, and also making sure that they taste good enough that my kids are gonna wanna have a bite or two or the whole plate. And also make it where it's simple and we're using real, whole food ingredients. And so, my book is called "Simple Green Meals," and there's 150 plant-powered recipes, from snacks, to meals, to desserts, to muffins, to so much goodness. Like, there's even this beautiful fairy tale porridge that you can make in the oven, batch make it, have it ready so that you can eat it that morning but it takes very little work, which is so important in the morning. So, you prep it all the night before, put it in the oven in the morning, and you're good to go.

Katie: That's awesome. I think it's for pre-order right now, so I'll make sure the link is in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm as well as the links to your blog and to your first book, for anyone who wants to jump on the challenge or find your books. But to wrap up, I always like to ask, what...so, if there's moms listening who know that they should probably be getting more veggies into their diets and their children's diets and they really wanna do it and they're still just kind of struggling with getting started or the budget aspect, any final tips for them just to jump in and get started?

Jen: Mm-hmm. I mean, I would recommend signing up for our free seven-day challenge, which is called Simple 7. And I built that challenge really for moms that have the same need, that need to keep it focused on foods that they can afford and also recipes that their kids are gonna eat. And so we've done it where you're just using seven ingredients to make seven green smoothies. And I've price shopped this out at a variety of stores all over, and you can go to Trader Joe's even and make seven green smoothies for under \$15 with this program. So, it's super affordable, and it's so delicious, and your kids are gonna love it too.

Katie: I love that. And, again, that link will be in the show notes, as well, for anyone who wants to find it, or it's at simplegreensmoothies.com. You guys can go straight there. But, Jen, thanks so much for being here today and for chatting. It's so easy to talk to you. I feel like we could do many episodes of this. But I hope that you get a lot of visitors to your site and that maybe a lot more people will adopt a veggie smoothie and have it in the morning.

Jen: Thanks, Katie. It was fun. Next time I'll do a smoothie date and I'll put you on Simple Green Smoothies. We'll chat it out.

Katie: Awesome. And thanks to all of you guys for listening, and I hope to see you next time on the "Healthy Moms Podcast."

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