



Healthy Moms Podcast

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

Episode 166: Understanding Autoimmunity and
the Mind/Body Connection With Body Belief
Author Aimee Raupp

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to, "The Healthy Moms Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. And I am here today with Aimee Raupp, who is a renowned women's health and wellness expert. She's the author of three books, "Chill Out and Get Healthy," "Yes, You Can Get Pregnant," and "Body Belief" is her most recent book and what I want to talk about today. She's a licensed acupuncturist and herbalist in private practice in New York. She holds a Master of Science degree in Traditional Oriental Medicine from the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine. And we are going to really delve into autoimmunity and its roots, and especially the mind-body connection today, because I feel like that is a key that's so hard for so many people to conquer. So, Aimee, welcome and thanks for being here.

Aimee: Thank you so much, Katie. I'm so happy to be here.

Katie: I'm so happy to have you here. And I love to always start with the basics. My listeners are really educated, and typically they know a lot about a given topic. But since we're going to go deep on a few topics, I want to just start with, can you define what autoimmunity is and kind of what's physiologically happening in that process?

Aimee: Sure. So, autoimmunity is when the body begins attacking its own tissues for unknown reasons. A common example is the thyroid. That's one of the most common autoimmune conditions, which is called Hashimoto's, right? So, something like 90% of hypothyroid cases are actually Hashimoto's where the body has,

for, "unknown reasons," has begun attacking its own thyroid and creates antibodies to it, and then that compromises the function of that organ or of tissue. So, we can have autoimmunity to our thyroid, you know, we see it sometimes in polycystic ovarian syndrome. We can see autoimmunity towards our ovaries. We can see it towards our joints in rheumatoid arthritis, towards skin in psoriatic arthritis. So, autoimmunity is...you know, the way I see it is the body's on high alert and attacking itself. So, there's a lot of inflammation and hostility in the body. And again, for unknown reasons, and then that sets off a whole cascade of just chaos within the body.

Katie: Got it. So, I'm curious because I am...so, you mentioned Hashimoto's, which is what I've struggled with for many, many years. And I know many of my listeners have struggled with either that or another form of autoimmune disease. I'm curious if this has been a personal struggle for you as well or more from the practitioner side. You've just addressed this quite a bit.

Aimee: Well, both. So, I have eczema and asthma, which are both...you know, asthma wasn't always considered an autoimmune condition, but now is considered one. There's a lot that are all of a sudden, you know, like endometriosis is a common one now, and even PCOS, people are on the fence about, but it has characteristics. So, eczema, though, is a telltale that there's some autoimmunity going on in the body. And I've been a long-time eczema sufferer my whole life. Now, it's not the most, you know, I think prohibiting autoimmunity, but it would set the cascade.

Had I not been controlling it, I think where I would have headed, like most women, is into Hashimoto's. So, you know, you can be on this spectrum where you have some autoimmunity and then it can trigger other autoimmunity. But I see it a lot clinically. I wrote my second book, "Yes, You Can Get Pregnant," and it was all about fertility. And what I realized in the research was that, you know, most of these women walking around with unexplained fertility challenges are actually dealing with a misdiagnosed, undiagnosed, or mismanaged, or all of the above autoimmune condition. And that's what led me to writing "Body Belief," because when you do the research, and you know because you yourself are one of them, I mean, autoimmunity is affecting 30 million American women. And that's just the ones that are diagnosed.

So, as a clinician with 15 years of patient care, I see autoimmunity impacting lives all the time. And then myself, of course, I've really learned how to manage my own and not allow it to progress into anything worse.

Katie: And that's such an important key because you often, at least clinically, you don't see autoimmune disease in isolation. It's actually a great thing. You keep it in isolation because, like you said, it's not a disease that's caused by, for instance, like strep throat. It's caused by a specific bacteria, there's not that connection. It's the body having an internal reaction to itself, and there can be many potential reasons. So, I definitely have my theories, but I'm really curious, what do you think are some of the contributing factors to this rise in autoimmune diseases, that's even affecting children at really drastic rates?

Aimee: Well, so, from the Western medical perspective or the current scientific research, you know, autoimmunity is on the rise. It's in the last 30 years has quadrupled and it's incidence affecting women 75% more than men. And women in their prime, but yes, it's all the way down to children at this stage. So, our genes don't change that fast. So, it cannot be our genetics. It has to be environmental influences, most likely the fact that we've introduced 80,000 to 100,000 chemicals into our environment since the 1980s. So, that's where the Western viewpoint sees it.

My perspective is a little different, you know, with a training in traditional Chinese medicine and being an acupuncturist and an herbalist, I'm also taught to look at the emotional side of disease. So, we say that any disease, illness, disharmony in the body, there's a physical component, but there's also an emotional component. And what I see clinically is that most women in our society...and autoimmunity is affecting women in their prime, their 20s, 30s, and 40s. I mean, it's affecting women, obviously, beyond 40, but it started probably in their 20s or 30s, and maybe the symptoms didn't really present themselves loudly enough until they hit their 50s.

But that women are really hard on themselves, women are attacking themselves, and they're not good enough. They're not achieving enough. And so if...you know, in Chinese medicine, we'll step back and say, "Okay, so if the body's attacking itself on this cellular level, on this physical level, where on an emotional level are you attacking yourself?" And that lends itself to the same level of hostility and inflammation, you know, it's just coming from an emotional space versus only from an environmental, or a nutritional, or physical space. So, to me...and that's why I wrote, "Body Belief," you know, the first two pieces of, "Body Belief" are really about the emotional, spiritual reconnecting to yourself and shifting your beliefs about your body. And then, of course, there's a whole diet and lifestyle plan in there to really tame inflammation.

But until we work on the emotional piece, I don't think it sets the stage for radical healing the way we are capable of with dealing with autoimmunity. So, yeah, I think there's many layers and I don't think, if to say, that anyone's to blame that their thoughts are creating their autoimmunity, but that I don't think we're supporting ourselves in all the ways that we could be on an emotional level.

Katie: I would agree with you. And that's been, probably for me, the hardest part of my own journey to get to, because I'm very type A, and my background is in research and journalism. So, my default is to research my way into fixing a problem. And so, I feel like I have done that, I have gone deep on every physical possibility of things that can help autoimmunity and reducing inflammation and, of course, the factors that we all know, like you need to get enough sleep and you need to get sunshine, and all those things. But I think because emotions are invisible, like it's hard sometimes to realize just how profoundly they impact us. So, can you like explain some of the examples you've seen of this in women. And I'm happy to share my experience as well.

I just know, like, for years, I would kind of put on a game face, and be like, "I can push through this, I will just fight harder. I will do more things." And it's been a lesson in the last couple of years to realize I actually have to let go and to give myself the same love and forgiveness that I give to friends and family so easily. But that seems to be such the big struggle. So, I'm curious what...specifically within this, the mind-body connection, what kind of things are you seeing women come to you with and what are they struggling through?

Aimee: Well, again, there's so many layers to it, but I agree. Most women do really well. They want me to just give them, you know, what diet to follow and what supplements to take, and check the boxes. And then, often, it's, "Well, I'm doing all those things and it's still not working." And so, you know, I think I saw that enough over the years that I began to realize, "Okay, we have to unpack the emotional space as well."

And what I see and what I hear of, you know, and through everything that I'm exposed to and all the women I deal with is, there is no self-compassion, there's very little kindness to themselves. There's very little flexibility. There's very little understanding. I said it in my first book when I wrote it in 2009, and I said, "If you wouldn't say it to your best friend that way, you shouldn't say it to yourself that way." So, it's just turning on our filter, again, and hearing what is the conversation that we're having in the privacy of our own minds? And

are you cheering yourself on or are you beating yourself up?

Because, again, if we're stepping back and saying, "Okay, it's environmental toxins, and it's inflammation, you know, in the body." So, sure, those are physical things, but then can emotions be toxic and can emotions be inflammatory? And so, how are you talking to yourself on a regular basis? And I can already tell with you that that type-A personality, I'm totally the same way. And my story always is, "It's not good enough. You're not doing it, you know, you're not working hard enough. You're not trying hard enough." And that's the typical personality that seems to wind up with autoimmunity.

Now, that's, of course, a generalization, but we tend to see that these type-As that are really hard on themselves and nothing really is good enough. So, they are the ones that set the stage, you know, that conversation that they're having in the privacy of their own mindsets, that stage for that really, you know, intense inflammatory reaction that lends itself towards autoimmunity. So, the work I did writing, "Body Belief" and what I see in the clinic all the time is I just try to get women and men...you know, I treat men, I treat children, I treat moms, and I treat everyone, but just can you say it better? How can you say it better to yourself?

And in, "Body Belief," I go over some really common beliefs of things like, "Oh, I'm too old, what's the point?" Or, "Oh, it's my genetics." I teach you to question all of these beliefs that we were either born into, have become ingrained. It's, you know, belief is my teacher. I'm a big Abraham-Hicks person and she always says, "A belief is just a thought you keep thinking," and you can think that thought into reality. And then there's neuroscience research to support that. But what beliefs are you walking around holding and repeating to yourself all the time? And I believe...this is my belief, but at the root of it, there's worthiness issues. You don't believe that you're worthy of the radical healing or that you don't believe that your body can heal. You don't believe you have the goods. You don't believe you were given the right genes or, "Oh, it's..." you know, nobody really feels that good. It's these basic, limiting beliefs that we're walking around with that are really limiting us because our beliefs dictate our behaviors, which then ultimately dictates our health.

And so, if we're not in support of our body or in support of our choices, in support of our health, in support of, you know, when we look in the mirror and see who we are, are we cheering ourselves on or saying something terrible to ourselves? That's a big culprit. I mean, I struggled with eating disorders in the past and body dysmorphic issues, and it really sets the stage for some major inflammatory reactions throughout the body on a physiological and cellular level. So, in there is, to me, the crux of the healing, is where we have to learn to practice self-love. And I know it's cliché, but it is key: kindness, compassion, patience with ourselves, and just take a step back.

One thing that I say to myself all the time and I try is I just remind myself I'm doing the best I can do, you know, and I'm showing up every day and I'm doing the best I can do. And that soothes me. So, that's what I would love for women, is to begin to say kinder, more soothing things to themselves in the privacy of their own mind. And that would calm the inflammation.

Katie: Yeah. It's been interesting for me to see, in the last couple of years, both in my own life and also just in reading and researching because, like I said, it's easy to discount that mind-body connection and how truly important our thoughts are to our whole life. But you see this in especially like people with terminal diseases or people facing very, very tough things, who shift their mindset and have this spontaneous remission where they heal. And it's, like, things like that should alert us to the fact that, yes, obviously, diet's important. My

background's also in nutrition. I will never discount the role of diet.

But, certainly our mind is, I would say, equally powerful. And that was a very tough place for me to get, but also, even more so, especially for type-As like you mentioned, we both are. I think it's easy to fall in the trap of, like, "Oh, darn. Okay. So, my mind is causing all these problems and now it's one more thing on my to-do list that I have to fix," and to get into that vicious cycle. And I feel like that's one of the few areas where it's so hard. Like type-A women can be like, "Okay, no sugar? Done." Or, "I'm going to exercise. Done." But learning that seems to be one of the toughest steps. So, do you have any like practical tactics or tips that you work through with women to kind of get even to that starting point?

Aimee: Yes. So, it's mapped out in the book too. I broke it up into pillars. So, pillar number one, and the most important pillar, is reconnecting to yourself. And so, you know, I think we typically hear about that as meditation or journaling. And in today's world, everybody's telling us to meditate, but I think it can be...I mean, I think meditation is extremely powerful and I try to do it every day. But I think it can be simpler than that. Can we just begin to, like I was saying earlier, filter. Can we begin to hear the conversation that we're having in the privacy of our own mind? Can we live, not just in our mind, but in our body as well? Can we begin to say, you know, "Oh, I do notice that when I do, you know, X, like maybe skip breakfast," right, if we go to the nutrition side and I, you know, "I feel like crap at 3:00 in the afternoon." And then, "I'm hard on myself because then I make bad choices with my food and then I beat myself up because I ate that sugary snack and I know I shouldn't have eaten it." And it's this, like, cascades.

But we are really good at compartmentalizing and separating. So, we're disconnected from ourselves. And so, the first step is just beginning to live in your body and hear that conversation, but hear also what your body is telling you every day. Because your body's giving you cues all day long about things that work for it and don't work for it. And we're pretty good at ignoring those cues.

So, one of my favorite, I call it instant reconnect, one of my favorite tools is when I'm in my head racing, you know, doing a million things, not doing them good enough because I'm being hard on myself, you know, and I'm thinking about dinner when it's 8:00 in the morning, or, you know what I mean. Or I'm planning the summer vacation and it's February, I will, you know, catch myself because I'm trying to be reconnected, and I'll just say, "Aimee, where are you? Are you right here? Are you in...like, where are you? Are you in your body?" And just that simple question, "Where are you," brings me back to my body. It slows down my mind. It reminds me, "Okay, you know, I'm right here right now talking with Katie about X. And here I am, here I am."

And it allows us to just become present again in our body, which is the first and most important stuff because until we reconnect, we don't even know what our body is saying to us or speaking back to us about the choices we've made, whether it was, you know, not sleeping enough the night before or skipping breakfast or, you know, having coffee on an empty stomach, or any of these things. Or even, are we still holding a lot of tension in our body from the conversation we had with our partner the night before, or the interaction we had with our boss earlier that week. Are we still beating ourselves up for something we did 10 years ago that we haven't recovered from, or whatever it is. But until you reconnect, you can't quite understand where the attacks are coming from, what they're rooted in, and then how to begin to shift them.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. And, like you said, I think that it is. It's definitely a slow process. We have to learn to trust ourselves and to move through that. And I know for me because...like my default instinct was just to try to...so, like I said, to push through and to ignore it. And for me, it was a process of, like you said, like,

connecting with where I was presently, and also acknowledging and realizing things in the past, they...your mind is there to protect you. And so, these things that we build up in our head, they're there for a reason and they served a very important purpose at some point in our lives that let us get to where we are.

And so, I had to go through this long process of like seeing those things that came from different points in childhood, or trauma, or, like, I was sick a lot as a child, which is also probably through my autoimmune disease, I had antibiotics like 40-something times. And I have like traumatic memories involving the hospital and the medical system. And to look back at those things and to realize like that fear in my head and that protectiveness, and to thank it because it served a purpose. It was there for a reason at that time, but I don't need it anymore. And that was like a breakthrough moment for me, was to realize you don't have to push through it. You don't have to conquer it. Sometimes, you just have to acknowledge it and to give it its place, and then let it go. Because like we do tend to carry all of those things. And, like you said, as women, it's so easy I feel like, to nurture other people and to love other people, and our children, especially. But then, to turn that on ourselves is maybe perhaps our greatest struggle for a lot of us.

So, I love that you really work through that with people. And I'm curious if you have any examples that you're willing to share of beliefs that you've personally had to let go over detox over the years, about your own health and body, if you're willing to get that personal, just to kind of maybe connect with some listeners on where they are.

Aimee: Oh, absolutely. I love to get personal. I think you said something really important, though, that I just want to highlight, and it's part of the personal story too of, you know, I have...in the second pillar in the book is all about renewing our beliefs, and I have this tool that I call the art of shifting our beliefs. And it's acknowledge, renew, transform, ART. But that first step is the witnessing. It's the acknowledgement that like, "Oh, there's that thought again." "Oh, there's..." You know, for me, it's always... I guess I had this thing as a kid where I was really very determined and I...you know, my dad would always say, it was like, "Aimee's way or the highway." You know, it was like I was right, no one else was really as right as me. And it had to be this way or no way. And I would be filled with rage if it didn't really go my way. And I had this like angry, young girl that would come out of me.

And in working with my coach over the years, she would say to me, "Now, who's reacting in this situation? Is that the angry, young girl or is that the grown, professional woman, who's a mom, and a wife, and, you know, running these businesses?" And I would, "Oh, you're right. I'm reacting." And it's same, it's the default position. And to start to acknowledge that and then to start to have a lot of compassion for that young girl, and even for yourself of what you went through. There was traumas that happened, and there were jolts, you know, or cracks in our foundation types of things that happened that left us feeling on the defense most of the time, so we would react rather than, you know, calmly come to a situation.

And so, I've had to retrain myself over the years, you know, some of my spaces are, for certain...you know, some of my body image stuff where I...you know, for me, when I began to see food as medicine, which was thankful...you know, I dealt with an eating disorder basically through college and into my early graduate school years. And it was rooted in not feeling good enough and control, as most eating disorders are, and I wanted to control everything around me, including how I looked and my body weight. And as I began to love and respect my body, and see food as nourishment and as fuel and as a way that I could, you know, better my health and feel better...because I felt like crap the whole time I had the eating disorder. And I looked like...you know, I didn't look so great either. My skin was dry, my hair was falling out, my nails weren't growing, I wasn't

getting a period. There was so many things that were wrong with my health and I was managing my emotions with alcohol and exercise, you know, just typical college years, I suppose, for many women.

And when I began to reconnect to myself...so, when I started studying Chinese medicine, you know, I was en route to go to medical school and I was out in a, you know, a great institution working my tail off. And then decided it wasn't for me, decided to study Chinese medicine instead. And they spent the first year of that track, you know, you're doing your sciences courses but you're doing a psychology track too, and the first year is all about practitioner healing thysself. Because until you heal yourself you can't heal others. Or until you really understand, you know, the root of...how to heal yourself, how to be in touch with yourself. And it was at that point in time that really shifted for me, where I began to reconnect and I began to say, "How's this eating disorder working out for you, Aim?" I mean, "How's all that exercise and drinking working for you?" You know, you kind of feel like crap.

And I tell some of the stories in, "Body Belief" as well and, you know, that reconnection was what helped me begin to see food differently, begin to see my body differently. Now, I see my body as this beautiful, incredible Machine. I mean, it's just...it's, you know, it makes babies. It's phenomenal. And I was able to make a baby at 40 and, you know, I think against a lot of what Western medicine believes. And, you know, I think...I always say, I think I'm healthier now at 43 than I was at 23, for certain. But that was through the reconnecting and that was through beginning to shift my beliefs and seeing that my body does work when I properly support it, when I cheer it on, you know, when I'm on the same team as my body. When I look in the mirror and like not just what I see, but who I see.

And, you know, postpartum, I, you know, I gained weight in pregnancy and I didn't lose all of my baby weight, you know, for a while. And some of those little demon came back of just, "Oh, I don't like what I see," or, "You're not good enough," or, "So and so's skinnier than you," you know, the little demon can come back. And then I just have to go back and remind myself, "It's about how I feel, though, and it's about how well my body is functioning, and that I'm doing the best I can do. And I'm supporting myself, and loving myself, and cheering myself on." But it's...you know, unfortunately, it's not a flip we can...you know, a switch we can flip in an instant. "It's work" every day of staying connected and hearing that conversation.

And we all fall into the not so easy to get out of rabbit holes of negativity, but how long do you stay there and how quickly can you begin to remind yourself, "Oh, I was here once before, and I got out. So, I know I can do that again." Or, you know, "This has happened in my life and that changed." Or, "I saw so and so go through it and she got through it, so I can, too." So, you just try to soften those thoughts and cheer yourself on more than you're not. And that, I think, is winning. Even if we're in a more positive supportive state 60% of the time than we're not, where we're doing really good for our body, and we're calming that inflammation and calming that emotional toxicity.

Katie: Yeah, that makes so much sense.

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Katie: And I'm curious if you also have any like common kind of renewed beliefs or like affirmations, or whatever you'd call them, that seem to like be kind of wildly applicable that women can benefit from.

Aimee: So, I have, you know, in the book, I have some...you know, I'll read some of the more common limiting beliefs and then we can...I'll read some of the renewed beliefs. Things like, "I'm too old to change. I'm set in my ways. There's no hope, so why bother. I have bad genes. I'm afraid to feel better. I don't know who I am without my illness. I'm not sure I believe that my body can heal itself. My doctors said there's nothing they can do to help." So, those are some real common ones that I see.

And then I have this exercise in the book and I had to soften that, so you go to the next section where you renew those thoughts. And things like, "I do feel better when I take better care of myself." I think most of us can get on that side. And you know, so this isn't...it's not going from, "I always knew I would get sick," to, "Oh my gosh, I never get sick anymore." We're not going from, you know, black to white, we're just going from black to a little gray to a little less gray to a little less gray to a little white. That's kind of the way I think it works when we're trying to retrain and rewire our brain from these real abusive beliefs to these softer, slightly kinder beliefs.

So, "I want to believe I can be healed. I am ready to feel better. I know stress affects my sleep, so I guess it could affect my overall health. There are a lot of people going through health challenges like mine. If I really think about it, I'm not alone in this process. I suppose there's no harm in making the dietary changes or beginning to tune into my beliefs," right? "Doing the emotional work can't hurt." Oh I love this one, "I know in my heart, I am meant to feel better than I do now." And that's one thing, you know, I ask every single new client I work with, you know, whether it's coaching or in the clinic, is just, do you believe that you can feel better? Because to me, if you made your way to me or to reading this book or to this podcast, you had hope, it's in there somewhere.

And so, it's about us, allowing...you know, about you allowing yourself to activate that again because maybe

it's been beaten down or there's so much proof that, you know, and again, that, "there shouldn't be hope." And you know, "Oh, it's in your genes and everybody else is sick in your family. So, this is just your destiny, deal with it." That's not true. There's just so much we can do to...you know, and I'm sure you've talked about this on your podcast before, but there's so much we can do to shift our genetic presentation, epigenetics is, you know, a booming science, obviously.

But there's so much we can do to bring back hope and just step by step. I'm doing this course right now on my Body Belief program and it's about rewiring the brain. And what I'm teaching is just, "How can I say it better?" So, say, you say to yourself every day, "There's no hope. Why bother?" Or, "I tried everything and nothing works." That's a real common one I see. Why not soften that a little bit and say, "Well, have I really dug deep on the emotional piece? No, I haven't. I guess I could try that." And like, Katie, like you said earlier, there have been people that had these really poor prognoses and really, really terrible diseases and they completely shifted their mindset and it all turned around. So, that could be me. Or, "Meditation seems to work for a lot of people, maybe I should try it."

But just staying in this space of, "There's no hope. Why bother?" Then that belief perpetuates so much. And it shifts your perception of your world and then you just begin to see, "See, there's no hope, there's no hope, there's no hope." But if you slightly shifted to, "There's a little bit of hope. There are some people that have made it through this and gotten to the other side. There are some people that have improved and felt better," or whatever it is, whatever you're trying to achieve. So, "I could be one of them," right?

And then get to this place where you think back to times in your life that things did work out for you and remind yourself of that. And it's almost a way of coaching yourself back out of that deep, dark rabbit hole and just saying, "Okay, I think, actually, there is room for some hope." And then maybe each day, there's a little more reason for hope and a little more reason for hope, and you start to see in your daily life, you know, you could just pay attention to, "Okay, what ways is hope being shown to me today," right? You know, "Did I read or did I come upon this podcast and now I'm feeling more inspired," or, "Did I read an article about someone healing from this disease or this illness?" Or, you know, "There are people that heal from Hashimoto's, and so I could too."

And you know, it's just that slight shift. And every day, you continue to work on it, and every day, you continue to stay connected in your body and begin...you know, communicate with it and cheer your body on. And you know, it might sound really, really out there, but your cells, you know, every single one of the 37 trillion cells in your body hears every single thing your brain says. And there's research to support that stressful toxic thoughts kill cells, they cannot survive that environment, and loving, kind thoughts cause cells to thrive and grow and release all these healthy hormones and neurotransmitters.

So, to begin to embrace that and see that you can cause a shift, it's just more gradual maybe than you want it to be, but then there are cases that it's not so gradual. So, it's just about us softening and us finding that compassion for ourselves, and that kindness, and slowly beginning to shift those thoughts and to a thought that feels believable to you. So, you could go from, "There's no hope. Why bother?" To, "There's some hope. I'll give you that. All right, there's 20% hope." And then maybe in 2 weeks, you'll be at 40%, but you don't have to go from, "There's no hope," to, "Oh my goodness, there's hope everywhere," you know, that's a little unrealistic as well. But just this slight, gradual shift.

And then you'll see that, then there will be more hope, and then you will cheer yourself on more. And then

you will...you know, your beliefs, again, like I said earlier, your beliefs dictate your behavior and your behavior dictates your health and your life and everything you perceive in your life and...but it all starts with those beliefs.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. And just like we don't go to the gym and gain all the strength in one session, we don't fix our brain in one time of thinking positively. Like you said, it's a process that we have to practice and exercise, just like anything else. A little bit of a tangent, but I'm really curious as a mom yourself and having now worked with so many people on this, are there any things that you are cognizant of doing with your own children to help them? Because, obviously, no matter how hard we try, our children always are going to go through difficult things as much as we wish we could stop that from them. But are there ways that we can help children kind of develop these skills at an earlier age, so maybe they don't have to get to the point that many of us have?

Aimee: Yeah, I'm really cognizant of it, I think, all my years of my own spiritual and emotional work. And so, I always try to...you know, so my son is two, about to be three in September, and he's a boy, and he's wild, and crazy, and so much fun. I know I try to lead by example. So, we do this thing even in the mirror in the morning, not every day, but we look in the mirror and we point out things that we like about each other and about ourselves, and we giggle, like we'll push our noses in. And, you know, just try to get this exercise of looking in the mirror and it actually being fun, and seeing ourselves and seeing each other.

I try to...you know, of course, I mean, I think we all hear this from parenting people, but when he's in an emotional state, I let him express it and we try to talk about it and I always say, "I understand you're frustrated, let's talk it through." And I remind him, though, that it's going to pass, you know, and this is just a moment and that, you know, he can feel better. And you know, I think, like, one of my favorite things and I really try to be there with him is, you know, let him see that he can make mistakes and that the world's not going to end. I mean, obviously, their world is very...is growing by leaps and bounds by the day, but it's still very small. And to say, "It's okay, you know, mom makes mistakes all the time," and we just, we figure it out and then we can do it again. And that's it. And I just try to keep on encouraging him. And sometimes he'll say, "Oh, I can't do it." And I say, "No. You can, you can." But your way might be different than my way, and so, I always just try to create that flexibility in there.

And then also, if I'm feeling frustrated or he catches me in a bad mood, which happens because we're all human, I explain it to him. I say, "Mommy's feeling frustrated right now," you know, and I obviously don't go into many details if it's, you know, long winded or something he doesn't need to know about, but, "Mom is feeling frustrated right now, but I know I can work through it. I know I'm going to feel better." And, you know, we take deep breaths and we try to focus and see how we feel. And sometimes, if he's having a tantrum, I'll just say, "Did you eat all your lunch at school today," or whatever, you know, and he didn't. And I say, "Okay, now, we don't always feel our best if we're not nourishing and supporting our body," and he'll say, "Okay, you're right." And, you know, with food, we really try to be conscious and practice gratitude when we're eating.

So, I mean, I try to do so much of it with him. One of the pieces of advice I always give to women is, you know, instead in the morning, you know, how we make their breakfast and then we go and we start doing all the dishes, or we straighten up the kitchen, or we're looking at our email. Instead, I make my own breakfast, it's usually the same thing as him, and I sit with him and I eat it. And I'm showing him that this is important to me too. This is important that I sit and I nourish my body. And when I go to exercise and he doesn't want me to

leave, I remind him, "This is something that mommy does to make herself feel good. This is something that's very important to me and how I nourish and support my body." And so, he gets it. And I think that's the biggest, is I really try to lead by example. But I also really try to let myself honor my feelings, let them come up, like witness them and acknowledge them. And I let him do the same. So, even at two and a half, we have our moments where we talk about our emotions and we witness them, and we also process it and there's, you know, I try not to let there be shame about anything.

Katie: Yeah. I think that's some great tips. And I would remiss because my background is in nutrition. I don't want to end the interview without talking a little bit about the nutrition and the environment side because you address those both really well in, "Body Belief" as well. And I feel like you are so amazing at the mind-body part. I definitely wanted that to be the focus, but I'd love if you could also share, for all the people listening who do have autoimmune disease, some of the things that you have found in your practice and in your clinical work, that seem to be the most effective from the dietary nutrition side as well as the environment side.

Aimee: Well, it's a lot. It's not an easy task, but a worthwhile one. As I said earlier, you know, we've introduced over 80,000 chemicals into our environment, and mainly in the form of things that are in our bath and beauty products to things that are in our food, and in the soil where our food grows in. So, for some people, it's a pretty radical change. For others, you know, a lot of Hashimoto people, if you will, they all seem to know that they...you know, gluten and dairy are no good for Hashimoto's, but any autoimmune disease, you know, some...the science shows us that there's not a single case of autoimmunity that doesn't have leaky gut. And I know you've gone into leaky gut before on your podcast, but leaky gut is basically when your intestines are leaking. They become more permeable, and proteins and substances that aren't supposed to get into the bloodstream get into your bloodstream and that causes more inflammation in your body. And it really just feeds the autoimmunity.

So, the key to healing, not curing, autoimmunity is we gotta heal that gut. So, that means we have to clean up the diet, we have to get rid of any potential inflammatory foods that are going to aggravate the gut lining, aggravate inflammation in the body, anything that's hard to digest. So, in, "Body Belief," I present an elimination diet and we're eliminating everything from gluten, and dairy, and soy to things like nuts and beans, nightshade vegetables. It's definitely autoimmune paleo is the approach that I'm following in, "Body Belief" with some Chinese medicine tweaks because we're more into cooked food than raw foods, and we love, you know, we still love sweet potatoes and butternut squashes. And so, there's some variations. It's not strict or absolute autoimmune paleo.

And there's lots of bone broth because broth is the best way to heal our gut. So, it's basically...what I've seen clinically is that some of my autoimmune patients can tolerate nuts really well. And then some of them, like myself, I can't have more than two handfuls of almonds in a week. Otherwise, my skin flares right back up and my digestion is a mess. Then other people...I can't touch beans, and some people can. And nightshade's for some. So, the only true way is not through food allergy testing or food sensitivity testing, it has to be through an elimination diet. And you have to strictly avoid every potential toxic substance. And then after a period of time, I think, you know, about four to six weeks, you slowly, one by one, add those foods back in, while over those four to six weeks, you've been doing lots of bone broth, eating very simple, very clean and allowing the gut to heal.

And then you reintroduce foods and you keep...you know, I give a food diary template in the resources page that goes with the book. And you keep a really detailed diary of, "Okay, I had X and then this is how I felt right

after. This is how I felt two hours later. This is what my bowel movement is like, any other notes." So, you can start to paint a clear picture, "Oh, that's interesting. Every time I have bell peppers, guess what? X, Y, and Z happens to me." That's what I've learned clinically is, you know, I've had plenty of patients do any of those food sensitivity tests and they're just not accurate, they paint...it is a snapshot, basically, it's not an overall picture of what's going on in the body. And you have to completely remove every potentially toxic food group.

And then in addition, you have to overhaul your lifestyle and your diet and, you know, they say the average woman is exposed to 500 chemicals before she leaves the house in the morning. And those chemicals are endocrine-disrupting chemicals. So, especially, if you have Hashimoto's, it's definitely playing a role there. But those chemicals are linked to autoimmunity. So, we have to...you know, I have a rule of thumb, if you can't eat it, you shouldn't put it on your skin. And I do a lot of DIY things at home when we make our own cleaning products. I created my own organic skincare line because I couldn't find anything out there that I thought was clean enough to eat, but that's what we have to...we have to reframe our entire life and limit those chemical exposures.

And at first, if this is all brand new to you, that's definitely overwhelming. And I'm all about, you know, I respect your dollar and I respect your time, so you can do it slow and steady. You just, as you run out of products, replace it with something less toxic. There's brilliant websites out there now like EWG, there's Skin Deep, and what's the other one? I think Dirty, you know, where you can really...you can see the toxicity levels of different products. And I always say to stay on the low end, below two is my rule of thumb on those scales. But overhauling the entire life is important, and reducing your chemical exposures as much as you possibly can will help you not just feel better in the moment, but it's longevity, it's healing. And earlier, you mentioned that autoimmunity is even affecting children. And the research is showing us that it's affecting children because of the exposures the moms are having in their pregnancies.

And again, I don't want anyone to feel bad. And we've all had our exposures and our moms had exposures, and that's probably why we wound up with some autoimmunity. Plastics were really popular in the '70s and '80s, and they were microwaving our plastic bottles with formula in the microwave and then giving it to us, and we were getting BPA exposure, and that probably triggered some autoimmunity in a lot of us. But we didn't know any better. So, it's about doing the best we can do, but limiting those exposures for certain, in your home and in your family, is really important. And if you have children, but especially if you're pregnant too because it can set the cascade that if your autoimmunity kicks in, which is very common for autoimmunity to kick in during pregnancy or postpartum. And if that kicks in on you, it can affect the baby.

And so it is, it's stepping back and reframing. I mean, we've introduced all these chemicals and maybe it's made life easier, but diseases have gone through the roof. And so, you know, we have to go back to the ways of our great grandparents and how they lived and how they ate and, you know, maybe we should all start having some chickens and a farm, but, you know, I'm being funny. But also, it's a thought, and it is about all of removing those toxins, you know, obviously, emotionally, but nutritionally and environmentally to truly heal and feel our best.

And I see it all the time, especially women trying to conceive, I mean, that was...to me, it was black and white. I would change their diet. I would change over their lifestyle, and then boom. And these are girls that are, you know, trying to get pregnant for eight years, all the fertility treatments in the world. And I see it in...you know, Hashimoto's is probably one of the most common things I see because it's the most common autoimmune condition, but you see the antibody load drop in a month. I mean, they can be in the thousands and then you

take all these lifestyle changes and the antibodies just drop down to a couple 100, 100.

And there's, you know, symptomatically, right? So, Chinese medicine, all I really care about is how you feel, what you're presenting with. Symptomatically, their lives change. And so, it's worth it, it's an investment in yourself. And I think, too, the first real step in standing up for yourself, and saying, "I deserve to feel better and I deserve to nourish and support myself. And I'm going to make these changes because I know it's going to help me." And so, there's a lot of things to shift, but yeah, what you put in your mouth and what you put on your body are two things you can control and you really should pay attention to them and be conscious of every single thing that you come into contact with, and how it's either going to support you or not.

Katie: Yeah, I definitely, definitely agree. I've written about this as well. And you have some amazing resources in, "Body Belief." We'll make sure to link to that in the show notes at wellnessmamma.fm for anyone listening, as well as links to your previous books. And, of course, they're also all available on Amazon, people can find them there. And also, we'll have links to your website and all of your resources because you have a lot of them. And I think that, like I said at the beginning, I think this is so important that you're really tackling the mind-body part, too, because there are tons of resources out there about the dietary side and the environmental side. I think the mind-body one is the tough one. And there's not as much information.

I think there is more awareness, it's starting to come around, but I'm glad that you're tackling this head on, and I appreciate you and your work and you being here with us today, and sharing this, and just for your time. So, thank you so much, Aimee.

Aimee: Oh, Thank you so much, Katie. I really appreciate your work as well. So, thank you so much for having me on.

Katie: Of course. And thanks to all of you for listening. And I hope to see you next time on, "The Healthy Moms Podcast."

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