



Episode 187: A Whole Life Challenge to Improve
Your Life In Small Daily Steps

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is brought to you by Perfect Keto. I have heard from a lot of you who are trying the keto diet right now. And Perfect Keto has several products that make it so much easier and tastier. They have keto-friendly sports drinks with zero additives, zero carbs, and only high-quality ingredients. And I've gotten so many questions about this. They also have exogenous ketones that raise blood ketone levels up to 1.5 millimoles per liter. So that would be simulating a fast. A lot of people use these exogenous ketones to increase mental performance, and energy production, and fat burning without the need to do extended fasting. And Perfect Keto really just helps make ketosis available to everyone, everywhere, all the time without the need to do extended fasting, like I said. You can check out these and all of their other products at perfectketo.com/healthymoms. And if you use the code HEALTHYMOMS, all uppercase, you can save 20% on any order.

This episode is brought to you by Four Sigmatic, they are one of my favorite companies! They make a wide variety of delicious drink mixes using medicinal mushrooms like chaga, cordyceps, reishi, lions mane and others. I especially love their instant coffee packets, which have all of the taste of regular coffee, but are easier to make, they have less caffeine and offer more of a brain boost due to the medicinal mind-boosting mushrooms. They also have delicious hot cocoa mixes that my kids love, and a wonderful matcha. They have all of that and more! You can check out all of their products and grab a 15% discount at foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama with the code wellnessmama.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and, I cannot wait to dive into this episode because I am here with Andy Petranek, which I hope I'm saying right, who has been a health and fitness leader for many years. He's been a coach for over 25 years. He was a United States Marine, a sponsored athlete in the Endurance, an Obstacle Course and Adventure racing. He was featured as one of the original 10 CrossFit affiliates in the world CrossFit Los Angeles and he's the co-founder of the Whole Life Challenge. A worldwide six week online in your life game that you play with friends and family to improve your daily fitness and well-being habits which I am about to jump into if anybody wants to compete with me.

And each week thousands of people tune into his podcast the Andy Petranek podcast where he talks to exceptional people about their expertise in one of the seven daily habits that he writes about nutrition, mobility, exercise, sleep, hydration, well being, and reflection. So Andy, Welcome and thanks for being here.

Andy: Thanks. That was quite a mouthful.

Katie: You have quite the bio, I got to be on your podcast recently. And I know how easy you are to talk to. And I know this is gonna be a super fun conversation. So I wanted to dive right in. And first and foremost with a bio like that, tell us your story, tell us a little bit about your background and how you came into the health world to begin with, because it sounds like you've pretty much done it all.

Andy: You know the health world, I kind of back doored my way into the health world because I mean, I really had no, there's no way I would have predicted that that's where I would end up from my upbringing. I was a, I grew up in a family of musicians. So my mom, orchestra conductor and string teacher and violinist. My aunt was a concert pianist, and a teacher and a choral teacher. My dad was a orchestra conductor. I mean, I had a tuxedo and was playing in orchestras and going to orchestra concerts before I could even walk. So, it was a

very different childhood than the way my life looks today.

I made a right turn at Albuquerque, you know, from Bugs Bunny when I got to college, and I kind of found that there was a lot of things that were still left to be explored in life outside of music. And in spite of the fact that I was at Eastman School of Music, which is like, one of the top music schools in the world. I was like, okay, I wanna go, you know, explore other stuff. And I got into lifting weights and getting in shape. And part of that came from the fact that I was United States Marine scholarship and ROTC scholarship, you know, I don't know, I was in ROTC in college and they paid my way through college.

And so part of it was I had to, but also part of it was fun. It was really fun. It was a very new brand new thing for me. I think one of the things in hindsight that was really cool about the fact that I didn't do many sports growing up is I didn't get any injuries. And I had no wear and tear on my body. So everything was very fresh and new and different and exciting for me. I got super fit, being a marine, and then I got out of the Marine Corps and kind of found my way into the corporate job world where because I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do, which is very difficult for a lot of former military people to get out and figure it out where they're gonna go and what they're gonna do. And I fell into a job that was an engineering job and a sales job, And while I was doing that, I discovered something called the Eco-Challenge, which was a brand new adventure race that was going to be run in the United States, run by a guy named Mark Burnett, who was unknown at the time. But he became the start of reality TV, Survivor and now a lot more stuff.

And it was his first TV event. It was it was on the Discovery Channel and I registered my team, I threw a wad of cash down I would think it was 10,000 bucks to enter the Eco-Challenge and I didn't even have a team. You had to have a five-person team, I didn't have anything, and I just knew I was gonna do it and that kind of set a trajectory for the next eight years. I was adventure racing long races which were like 300 or 400, 500 miles and then short races. They were like three hours and building relationships and being on teams and being around teams and then getting sponsored by Red Bull to compete in the short races and you know, people started asking me what are you doing to be in such great shape and so I kind of naturally fell into the personal training world, I had gone back and gotten a massage therapy certification. So I did have a little bit of anatomy and physiology training.

And then I went back and did a bunch of catch up, like I went back to UCLA and I just wanted to fill in a lot of the gaps because I really didn't know anything about the whys of why the body works and how the body works and biomechanics and you know, I knew nothing essentially. And so I went back and filled in a lot of those gaps. And then I went down and trained with Paul Chek for the course of about four years and then built a clientele of personal training clients and discovered CrossFit and I became the ninth affiliate back, and this is in 2004, and CrossFit just epitomized...At the time their structure and their philosophy epitomized really why I was doing what I was doing. Like, it was really about health and well being and fitness and being your best.

And it was a system that captured a lot of the way I felt about why I was doing what I was doing. And so it was very natural organic fit for me. And that affiliate became one of the kind of leaders in the world, the CrossFit world I mean people today still know, you know, the original did 10 CrossFits and you know, CrossFit LA, was one of those and then that brings me to what I'm doing now which is the Whole Life Challenge. It started in 2011 and it started as just another opportunity to help people change their lives in my gym. I had been doing fitness challenges for about 10 years that were, do a workout, train for eight weeks, and then do the workout again and see how much you've improved by.

We added a little competition to it. We added some money to it to give people some skin in the game. And we were in the process of trying to answer the question, how do we make this more impactful in people's lives? How do we bring in the other elements that are so important to their health and well being? Not just fitness? How do we bring in, you know, mindfulness and how do we bring in nutrition and how do we bring in stretching and mobility and we came up this very basic format, we included a point system and a leaderboard. And we fortunately had a couple of software developers who were on our team, not on our team, who were clients at the gym, and they talked to us off the ledge of doing a big share Google spreadsheet. That was our first plan doing this, the Whole Life Challenge was born and we did the first one in 2011 with 150 people. We did in the second one the year after with about 300 people, those people that were in our first one invited their friends and family. And then we launched it into a worldwide thing where we went back to a lot of the CrossFit gyms that I had relationships with, we brought in a business consultant who I had partnered with previously. And we made him a kind of an exclusive Whole Life Challenge...

The first global Whole Life Challenge is gonna be exclusively for the gyms that he consulted with, and we suddenly had 7000 people in the first Whole Life Challenge around the world. And that kind of gave us our footprint and our foothold. And since then we've grown. We've increased. We do it now, four times a year. The challenge is only six weeks long. We had 28,000 people in the January Whole Life Challenge this year and we're, you know, continuing to grow about 20% a year and changing lives like really profound, long-lasting change. Mostly because of the approach we take. It's very, you know, if you hear my bio, and you hear all the crazy hardcore stuff I've done, which you guys just heard, you might think that the Whole Life Challenge is some crazy hardcore competition and it has nothing, it's nothing like that.

So, you know, it's really about being gentle and taking manageable, setting manageable and reachable goals, and changing your life one baby step at a time. So, yeah, I mean, that's it.

Katie: I love that and I definitely want to delve deeper into the Whole Life Challenge. But first, I feel like I have to ask you because I have a few close friends who were Marines or are Marines and I feel like certainly like you guys can definitely compete with the best in the world on physical fitness. But what I really, what really strikes me as the difference is the mindset and so I'm so curious if or how the Marines and that whole experience changed your mindset and your grit and your ability to power through things and how that's fallen through into your daily life now even as a retired Marine.

Andy: It's a really good question. I think that music had a lot to do with me being a, "Success as a marine", like I think the discipline and the practice and the daily regimented requirement to keep showing up played a big part in me being in going into the Marines but then the Marines just that, I didn't have a competitive combative bone in my body really, prior to being in the Marines. I mean it's not I don't think it was that I didn't have it is I just wasn't connected to it. I didn't really, I think there was part of me that always wanted that, and I didn't know how to get it. I didn't know how to access it. And I mean, as you can imagine the Marines, that is definitely one thing that they excel at, I mean, self-discipline and esprit de corps and learning that the choices you make matter. And they matter to those around you, and they matter to yourself. And, you know, the honor and the integrity and the esprit de corps the kind of the pride you take in, in who you are on the inside. Those kinds of things all became very normal that literally became part of my life part of my being.

I think one of the things Marines does really does really well is it, it injects its operating system on top of either it pulls some of your operating system out and injects it's operating system on top and in getting out I think that's one of the hardest things in getting out of the Marines is finding again your own operating system and

all those things that were part of my Marine way of being all have become integrated into my life now in various ways and they are incredibly valuable and supportive and helpful. You know, I think I will always run the risk of allowing them, they can run amuck easily. They can, if I get too connected and too attached to some of those ways I can come across as an asshole, arrogant or, you know, too strong-willed and so I just have to be conscious of that, and know that, it's not always, it's not just my way or the highway, but I think I've learned that really well over the years and in working with and building teams that are not military based. And I've been fortunate enough to be able to, you know, build some pretty amazing teams around building successful businesses. And yeah, so I don't know, did that answer your question?

Katie: It does. I'm always curious because I am a big believer that our life experiences really form us, and I know for me, at least the toughest experiences in life tend to have had the most positive impact later on and provided me skills that I needed at another point in life. And I figured like your answer that it would be similar with the Marines and going through something that was difficult but also I'm sure amazing at times and then having to transmit that into normal life afterwards. So super fascinating.

Andy: Yeah, that's exactly what I mean, that was my experience wholeheartedly, it was one of the, you know, it was probably the hardest period of my life and definitely the boot camp and the Officer Candidate School and the basic school were some of the hardest schools because they're pretty long and arduous and physically demanding, and mentally demanding, and emotionally demanding. Some of the hardest stuff I've ever done.

Katie: I've never been through it. But I've heard that that it teaches us your physical limits, but even more so like mentally, what you're capable of. And that's the more important lesson. So thank you for sharing that. And I can imagine that it would improve like your discipline and your follow-through in daily life, it makes perfect sense. And I wanna go back to the Whole Life Challenge too, because I'm super fascinated by this concept, because I feel like there is so much health and wellness information out there. And the reason I wanted to have you on is that I feel like the big key that people struggle with the most is the consistency and the motivation. Because a lot of us know a lot of information about what we should be doing and it's actual day to day implementation and also sticking with it for the long term that really makes the difference. And that's the hardest part. So I feel like you've really addressed this challenge but I'd love if you could go a little deeper on like, how you incorporate those different steps and what that actually looks like in a day to day scenario.

Andy: Yeah, it's a really good question. You know, engagement is a really, really big thing and keeping people engaged and interested is a really, really big thing and you know, we tried and our first attempt at the Whole Life Challenge was a dismal failure. I mean it wasn't a failure and that it was a step in making the Whole Life Challenge but it was a failure in terms of affecting my community because we built it as an educational platform, we call it Food University and it was an eight or 10 week course you had to get blood work at the beginning and blood work at the end and we were teaching things about hormones and body systems and your circulatory and you know how all these things on the outside affected what was going on the inside. And the information was really, really good but we found that, we only had 12 people sign up for the course.

I think about two people were still engaged in it by the end, and it really wasn't translating to action in people's life. And we realize like, okay, well that doesn't work. More information, and I think you hit the nail on the head, there's so much information available. I mean, if you want to know something about any part of your body and you Google it, it might not be the end all be all, and you have to be careful of your sources. But there is information available and most of a lot of it is really, really good information available at your

fingertips. People still have trouble with motivation. So the answer is not more information, the answer that we came up with was action. Like how do we, we wanted to build action and requirements for action into the practice and into the challenge, into the game.

But we wanted to do it in a way that didn't require judging and didn't require, you know, well it requires rules but it doesn't require, you know like a doctorate degree to interpret the rules and we also didn't want to make it so that you...we didn't wanna turn people into followers of the Guru's of the Whole Life Challenge. Because for us, the motherlode for me as a trainer was to stop people from thinking they need a trainer. Like learn what you need to learn and then go back to your life and do it in your life and be responsible for making the right choices and doing the right things that you already know how to do because you learn how to do it and so that was a really important part of building in the challenge. It's funny because when people sign up sometimes they're like, Well, where's the meal plan? And where's the exercise plan? I wanna know what I need to do every day.

And we're like, "Well, there isn't any." And it's not that there isn't any info available on our website for that stuff. There's tons, there tons of options but the difference between what we're doing and what a lot of other people are doing is we don't tell you what to do, we don't tell you how long to do it, we don't tell you how to properly prepare or give you even a food list. We give you a food list of what's allowed and what's not allowed but we don't tell you...we don't give you a shopping list, we don't give you recipes to follow. We encourage and actually kind of require you to actually do some work and to be a responsible party in your own health and fitness. And when we get engagement that way, when we get people who are willing to do that because it does limit the audience. It definitely limits the people who are willing to do this.

I'd say if we were doing some sort of a social media, massive, you know, do this thing, there would be a level of expectation of give me what I need to do this and, you know, let me just follow the directions and make it easy for me and it doesn't lead to long-term change. All that happens at the end of that is okay, now I need the next one. And now I need the next set of instruction and rules. So when you engage this way, you actually become part of the process of your own process and you start experimenting and exploring. So that's part of the secret behind the engagement and the other part is the points and the accountability with the points and the camaraderie and community around writing reflections.

The points...You know, people have very interesting, they have very interesting relationships with points. Some people will die for points. I mean, they will do, I shouldn't say die, they'll do anything in the world to get points and to get more points. And so they look at the Whole Life Challenge. And they look at the rules, and the rules are very simple. And they're like, "Oh, I'm just gonna go for a perfect score of course". And that is not always the best way to approach the challenge because it means very often that you're making choices that void your life of joy, that void your life of not your complete life, but like choices you'd make if you were going to your best friend's wedding and you're like, "Okay, I'm not having a piece of cake because that would cost me a point in the Whole Life Challenge". Or I have to get my workout in first in the morning. So I'm gonna go to bed early during the bachelor party and not drink because gonna lose me points and drinking and I've got to get to bed early so I can get up in the morning and get my workout. So I won't have another time to do it.

I admire those choices. They're great, but there are events in life that supersede those being that super accountable for points. Having points in the mix allows people to start to make those choices and start to make those decisions and be engaged, knowing the consequences of the choices and then being able to say you know what, it's worth it. The points worth, the five points, or the two points or whatever was worth the

event that I got to participate in and then sometimes it works the other way around. That bowl of ice cream that is calling my name from the freezer at 11 o'clock at night when nobody else is around. That's not worth the point. I don't need to do that. And so it works both ways, and you know, the points feed right into the team accountability board because other people are looking at your points and that adds another level of being accountable as does your writing, and your reflections. So each day that you write something about your progress, it's not private, it's public. And so everybody on your team can see what you're writing about, and hopefully, you know, you're being perhaps of the most intimate secrets of your life, you're not gonna share because it's not intended for that. But you get an opportunity to be vulnerable, and to test out being vulnerable in your community and, you know, share where you need support and where you need help, and then your successes. So that builds this community piece that's really, really powerful in these small teams.

Katie: I love that and I love what you just said about balance and about how there are times when the people in the community, the event are more important because to me, I think that's something else that can be missed, especially when we get so in depth into the health and wellness world, is that health and wellness is not necessarily a means in and of itself or an end in and of itself. We are healthy, we try to be healthy and vibrant so that we can be more alive in our relationships, more in community with people to have a more rich life not just for the sake of eating more vegetables. I love that you brought that point up and that you balance that out. I think that's so important.

Andy: Yeah cool. It's funny because when we did the first Whole Life Challenge, we had a lot of people who went after it to win and went after it to score all the points and in fact our bonuses. We had bonus points back then and you could actually earn points on top of a perfect score. So not only did, but that was an inadvertent mistake, well, a missed step, I don't know if it was a mistake but we had people who were not just going for a perfect score, they were going for a perfect score plus perfect bonus score on top of the perfect score and we changed that really quickly. We're like look you don't get to keep points, you get bonuses, you get bonus tokens, but they gotta be used and they're there to keep you motivated, keep you interested, have fun with but they don't count for more on top of a perfect score. Because otherwise, you know, this quest for perfection is not supportive of really your own health and well being.

Katie: For sure. And I totally get the appeal of it though, because I'm a perfectionist in recovery and also very competitive. So I can totally see how people could get very competitive with that. Can you walk us through a little bit like examples of each of the seven daily practices and what points might actually look like in a practical sense?

Andy: Yeah, sure. Well, let's see the first one that is, look the Whole Life Challenge is not a nutrition challenge. I shouldn't say that right out of the gate. But nutrition and food is the thing that's in front of people for most people three to five or six times a day. So it's the one that if you're gonna struggle with something, a lot of people struggle with. So obviously there's a food component. Every day of the challenge you start in the food category with five points and at the beginning of the challenge you choose the level that you wanna play on. We have a kick-start level, a lifestyle level, and a performance level. They're really based on improving the hormonal balance in your system and reducing inflammation, but if you were to compare the performance level to something else that's you know you want a quick comparison it's close to Paleo, it's a very similar you know, second cousin to Paleo.

The lifestyle level is meant to be more livable for you know like long-term livable, if you have you know health issues that you're dealing with, you know that are inflammatory based, we suggest the performance level and

maybe even more strict than the performance level but if you're looking to live a long life and you know that's really more the lifestyle level. And then the kickstart level is really for people who have been negligent in paying attention to their diet and not really accountable to anything and you know they eat Subway for lunch and they maybe have some fast food three days a week. And they may, you know, like their diet is in, you know is need of triage. And so it just gives a lot more options and it's a lot easier place to begin.

Depending on the level you choose for every infraction of a rule. So let's say on your level, it doesn't allow for, let's just say no alcohol, right? So if you decide that having a glass of wine with dinner is really important, maybe it's a business dinner, maybe it's a celebration of some sort, you want a glass of champagne if you drink that champagne, you lose a point. So at the end of the day your goal is to keep all five points, you can't lose more than five, you can't go in the negative and you score yourself based on the honor system you know, however many points you got, or you know not you lost but how many you got. So you could end the with one point with anywhere from zero to five points. That is the only area of the seven daily habits that has a single point gradation in points. Everything else is either you did it or you didn't do it and they're worth five points or no points.

So moving on from nutrition, you've got exercise, and exercise is very, very simple. You have to do 10 minutes of exercise and you get to decide what counts. Now our advice is it needs to feel like exercise to you. Now that can include if you're a hardcore athlete and you are on a rest day and your coach tells you, hey, you need to really rest today, you can do active recovery. If you walk your dogs and you're moving around and it's active recovery that totally counts. If you would consider it part of what you're doing for your fitness totally counts. My mom can do. My mom plays and she's 83 years old and she walks. So she'll take a long walk, I probably don't ordinarily count walks as exercise for me because I'm at a different place in my fitness.

So you get to count what you wanna count and all you got to do is 10 minutes. There no bonus points for doing more, there are no negative, you know, like graded points for doing you know, five minutes instead of 10 minutes, you got to get 10 minutes in. And we do the same thing for mobility. So mobility is just a fancy way of saying stretching and that can be with tools like lacrosse balls or foam rollers or rubber bands. It can be taking a yoga class, it can be just bending over and hanging from your waist for 10 minutes. It's got to be 10 minutes. You can you can accumulate the 10 minutes over the course of a day or you can you know, do them all at one time. You can do it while sitting in front of the television. Again there's so many options for getting this done and getting it in.

The next area is sleep and sleep, you get to decide what a good night's sleep for you is. So we recommend that people don't make too large jumps from where they are currently. So let's, let's say you're averaging five hours a night now. We wouldn't recommend that you jump that up to seven hours for the challenge. We'd say maybe a good healthy jump would be five hours and 15 minutes, and every day you get your five hours and 15 minutes you earn your five points. If you don't get your five 15, you don't get your five points. Again, there's no gradation. Hydration is one that's also black and white, we recommend, we require you to drink 30% of your body weight in ounces of water. So if you weigh 150 pounds, that means 50 ounces of water, which is a little bit less than two quarts of water. And you know, if you're super athletic, or you sweat a lot and or you're training, or you live in the deep south and you know you're sweating more than, or it's summertime, then you probably need more water than that.

And I don't really notice an area where people need less water than that. But I'm sure there is one. If your doctor tells you don't drink that much water, well, then, you know, doctor supersedes and you pick a number

and that's your number. So we got well-being practices and we got reflection, I'm gonna do reflection first. At the end of every day we built into the challenge this piece where you have to write about how you're doing or how you've done and we do that mostly because we wanna give people the opportunity not just to do what they have to do, but to think about what they've done and whether or not it's working and whether or not the strategy that they used for doing that thing was a good strategy without just going through the challenge and going through the motion of doing the stuff. We want there to actually be a thought around like an evaluation each day, so you get like two chances to evaluate how you did. You get to do it while you do it, and then you get to do it at the end of the day when you reflect on it, and your reflections go into your communication feed, like I said before, and your teammates get to see kind of what you're up to and how you're doing. And again, that's five points.

And then the last piece is a well-being practice. The wellbeing practice changes week by week during the challenge, and this is kind of our catch-all area for things that are, there definitely related to health, fitness and well being, but not as directly a lot of times. You know, like de-cluttering, or like organizing or like disconnecting from electronics or mindful, like in mindfulness practice, like journaling, or meditation or even playing happy music, that's one of the, that's come up, it's a joyful noise or joyful sound or something like that, we call it in the challenge. So those each week change over the course of the challenge, and the idea is that you engage in that practice to the best of your ability and we give you some real black and white rules to follow around doing it and you score yourself either you did it or you didn't again. So that's really it. Every day, you can earn 35 points total.

Katie: Got it, and it's basically the honor system. It sounds like people are super involved, but they're the ones grading themselves, right? Like they don't have to submit like photo evidence or any of that?

Andy: There's no photo evidence. You know, if you're doing it with a team of people that are your friends and you live close to one another. I think it's more sticky, if you do have more to go with it. You know, like you're gonna see each other, you guys decide to you know, put some money on it or agree to take the winner out to you know, a big dinner, or just it makes it more interesting and more fun. But the reason we don't do that, from a global standpoint is we have no way of verifying. We don't want to be in that business. This is not a game necessarily to win, this is a game that everybody wins. Everybody's gonna win at their own pace and their own speed and in their own life. And who are we to say that, somebody that loses five pounds on it, won bigger than somebody that didn't lose any weight but change their relationship with their son or daughter, you know, what's the winner who wins that one?

Katie: That's awesome. And do you feel like or do you have any follow-up data as to how this, do you feel like this mindset helps people stick with things longer? Like are people continuing to integrate into life after the challenge?

Andy: We don't have any data around that. We know that the people that this stuff tends to stick with are the people that continue to come back and do challenge after challenge, after challenge. We've had people email us who have not come back and done challenge after challenge and have only done one or two challenges and have come back, you know, two or three years later and told us that the habits stuck. We haven't tried to set up any sort of double-blind studies to prove that this method works. It's funny, me and my partner Michael are coaches and we never intended to set ourselves up as being the gurus or the experts or the scientists who are giving people this advice. Like, we just looked at what works and what doesn't work for the large group of people that we've always worked with. And this is what works, this is what works for a lot of people. And, you

know, the people that are willing to re-engage in doing this over a long period of time are typically the ones that have the most success doing it.

Katie: Got it. It's such a cool concept. I love it. I can't wait to try it myself.

This episode is brought to you by Perfect Keto. I have heard from a lot of you who are trying the keto diet right now. And Perfect Keto has several products that make it so much easier and tastier. They have keto-friendly sports drinks with zero additives, zero carbs, and only high-quality ingredients. And I've gotten so many questions about this. They also have exogenous ketones that raise blood ketone levels up to 1.5 millimoles per liter. So that would be simulating a fast. A lot of people use these exogenous ketones to increase mental performance, and energy production, and fat burning without the need to do extended fasting. And Perfect Keto really just helps make ketosis available to everyone, everywhere, all the time without the need to do extended fasting, like I said. You can check out these and all of their other products at perfectketo.com/healthymoms. And if you use the code HEALTHYMOMS, all uppercase, you can save 20% on any order.

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Katie: And I also want to delve into your personal background a little bit because you have such a background in health. And I'm always fascinated for people like you, and I'm curious to know what are a few of your top daily rituals or tools or practices that you found are the most beneficial in improving or maintaining health?

Andy: Probably the biggest one for me is winning the morning. Like I find that if I win the morning, I win the day. And I know that's kind of cliché but it's been a really challenging thing for me like a practice to, "Win the morning", Because I don't typically like to get myself to bed in time to get up early enough to have the quiet time in my house to, "Win the morning". And I also need a good amount of sleep like if I go to bed at 11, I really need to sleep until like 6:30 or quarter to seven. By the time I do that, my son's up by seven, my wife's up, the house is you know going pretty strong. It's only three of us but it's still going pretty strong, and I run out of time. So I've had to really do some inner work around getting myself to bed you know, setting a rigid bedtime 9:30 or 10:00 so that I can get up at 5:30 at the latest and get in the ritual and the rituals.

The things on my list or meditation usually for five or 10 minutes, journaling which usually takes about 10 maybe 15 minutes. I play at this brain game called brain HQ, I don't know that that one's any better than some of the other ones out there but they help keep me sharp, and I'm experimenting this year to see if it over a course of a year that makes a difference. So I do that in the morning. I like to get some like 10 minutes and mobility in and I have a few different mobility routines that I follow like basically a head to toe joint...full articulation of all my joints. If I get those things done, I also drink water in the morning and that's a big one. Like a first thing in the morning when I get up, I try to drink two 12-ounce glasses of water. If I get those things done, the day is looking pretty good. Like the setup of the day is looking pretty good.

Now things still may go to crap, and I still, you know, It doesn't mean that life is gonna be perfect, but I feel really good by 6:30 or quarter to seven when those things are done. And I'm more at peace. Oh, the other thing is I try to, at least look over the last thing I do because part of one of the problems for me in the morning is when I turn my phone on. If I let myself go into email, or go into Slack, or go into Google like for news, it becomes a tractor beam, and invariably, 45 minutes later, I didn't realize but I'm still on my phone. So when I turn my phone on, I have this very strict rule that I have now for 45 minutes. I don't go anywhere other than, there's a couple meditation apps I use or to play that brain app. But the last thing I like to do is to kind of look at my calendar and look at my to-do's for the day and like kind of give myself a mental rundown of what's coming.

Katie: I love that and I'm so with you on that because I keep my phone in airplane mode when I'm sleeping. And I try not to turn it off of airplane mode unless I know that like someone in the family needs to text me about something but until I've gotten through the morning routine and gotten through everything I need to do with my kids and then tackle that when I start tackling work because it's, you're right, it's so distracting and it's so easy to get sucked into that vortex for sure.

Andy: Yeah, I mean, even just one email. I mean, one email can lead you down. I mean, I've had it happen one email or one Slack, somebody you know, it's very innocent. You know, somebody asked you a question that you can answer in 10 seconds. But suddenly my brain jumps into three different things, and I don't even realize it's happening. And then suddenly, like I said, you know, 20 minutes later, 30 minutes later, I'm still in Slack. I'm like, God, what's just happened?

Katie: Yeah, exactly. So I also wanna ask you a somewhat selfish question because you have a background in personal training and obviously in fitness and I love weight training, especially heavyweights. So I'm always curious to ask people like you who have an expertise what are the best ways, especially for women? We know the benefits, we know that weight training helps keep your bones healthy, your heart healthy, there's so many benefits, but what are some of the best ways for women to train with weights? Is there a particular type of program or method that seems to work best in your experience?

Andy: Well, you know, I try to steer people away from programs and steer them more in terms of concepts and I think one of the big mistakes I see women making is treating themselves differently than humans. And what I mean by that is they're not little delicate flowers. No human is a little delicate flower and like there's no reason that a woman needs to limit herself to just picking up dumbbells that weight less than a pound and a half. It drives me bonkers because they go home and they pick up their kid or they go home and they pick up a five-gallon water bottle and they have to get their suitcase you know, if they're gonna be an empowered woman, they're not gonna constantly wanna ask a man cart their suitcase around so they're gonna carry it down the stairs themselves and they need to be able to like in my opinion, weight training and using weights should support what you're doing in life.

So if you take a snapshot or a movie you know, of your day And you look around at the ways that you move your body and you pick things up and move things around. What are those movements? You know, you're probably lunging, you're probably squatting, you're probably, you may not be doing a pull-up, you may not be pulling yourself up and over a fence but you're you may be putting something in an overhead compartment like a briefcase or maybe a heavier bag. You may be picking your kids up. Is your training doing that? And if your training isn't doing that or mimicking doing that, it doesn't have to do it identically, then perhaps it's time to rethink what you're doing because you're not, you know, little pink dumbbells they build little muscles like

your shoulders but your body doesn't think about body parts, it works as one homogenous unit. This is how do I accomplish this mission, and if the only thing that you've done is work body parts, you are not, you have not aligned your training to your life, and that for me is really the key for any, I mean this goes for men or women but I just see more women thinking this way. You can funnel bodybuilding into this same conversation, the weights are heavier but bodybuilding is the same conversation. So function, function, function, function, how do you work? How do you operate?

Katie: That makes perfect sense. So favoring more like natural movement exercises like squats and deadlifts and pull-ups over just doing like smaller isolated movements? Right?

Andy: Exactly. And it doesn't have to necessarily even be with weights. I mean, I can get a great squat workout with doing no weights but I have to add some intensity which means I have to like squeeze more work into less time. So you know if I was gonna give somebody a hard squat workout with no weights, I would say okay, why don't we see how fast you can do a 100 squats or maybe 50 squats. How fast can you do that? And now I mean there as a trainer to assess form and I wouldn't give that to somebody who didn't already have good form in their squats but when you add the time component and the pressure that comes with that, you add a level of intensity that you know quite honestly you're gonna come away from that sore and you're gonna feel that and that is effective. It should be hard and it should hurt and it should leave you feeling the result of that the next day.

Katie: Great. That's awesome. So a few questions as we get close to the end of time but I wanna make sure I asked you because I love to ask everyone. What are a few things that people don't know or understand about what you're excellent at?

Andy: You know, I thought about this because you gave me some of these questions in advance and one of them I wrote down is, and this is something that I've wrestled with and I've had various breakthroughs with and that's really the definition of long-term in terms of life and our life. Like we tend to think that setting long-term goals means set a goal for what you want in six months or nine months or maybe a year. That's long term. And you know, when it comes to your health and well being, how long did it take you to get in the condition you're in that you don't like? You know, did it take 20 years? Did it take 15 years? It didn't happen in six months. It took a long time. So it's not gonna be quick to change the things, probably it's not gonna be quick. You'll get some results within six weeks, like people get results all the time doing the Whole Life Challenge. But if you want really long-term results, you've got to shift that thinking from six months as long-term to maybe six years is long-term or you know, like this is a 10-year plan. Like I'm gonna get this back but it's gonna be slow and consistent and my life is gonna look completely different in 10 years. But I'm gonna get there gradually and maybe I'll set some guideposts along the way. But it's a whole different context long term.

Katie: That's a great one. I think you're so right. I think we all and especially in today's world, with instant gratification, we wanna fix the problem yesterday, or at least in five minutes. And you're right the hard things in life take a little more time for sure.

Andy: Yeah, I also, you know, another one that came up for me was about finding joy, finding joy in everyday life, the mundane. I think one of the ways to get through things that feel mundane are to choose them. Like instead of saying, I've got to do this, you get the opportunity to say I wanna do this and I know that sounds kind of you know, like, well, yeah, of course you could do that but it really makes a difference, and finding a way to find joy in these little moments. You know, there was a CrossFit saying that used to go, "It doesn't have

to be fun, to be fun". And it's probably the phrase that has stuck with me the longest because I, you know, a workout doesn't have to be fun. It's not actually supposed to be fun. But when you're done, you get this feeling of satisfaction inside. And you speak about it in a way that sounds like you had fun. It's a very odd thing.

And I think one of the strategies I've used over the years of staying on track is finding joy in it, you know like finding something you really wanna learn how to do and learn it and align your life up with those things that bring you joy. If it brings you joy to do stuff with your kids find a way to incorporate fitness into your life with your kids and do it with them. Like what a cool thing.

Katie: Yeah, for sure. I interviewed someone recently who took that to a new level. She actually...her kids sports, she does it with them, including competitive diving like when they practice, she does it too. So I was super impressed with that.

Andy: I did that with soccer with my son's soccer team. He got to a level where I really couldn't do that anymore. But we still have a family fun day on Sundays, and the dads go out and they play with the kids and against the kids. And they get a kick out of it.

Katie: That is so cool. Okay, so next question. Do you have a favorite book or a book that's been really meaningful on your life?

Andy: Yeah, you know, I thought about that too. It probably the book that's been the most useful and in kind of prying open, my desire to explore like self-improvement was really, the first book was really, Tim Ferriss', "The Four Hour Workweek". There was so many books along the way that had a massive impact. The first one that pried me open from an emotional standpoint that got me working with a life coach, and that showed me that failed relationship after failed relationships were happening, it wasn't them that was the problem. I mean, certainly they had their part. But I also had my part that I hadn't been seeing. It was a book called, "Codependent No More," and that book rocked me. I mean, that book just, I mean talking about pulling the veil up over top of something that was completely hidden and invisible to me. That book got me going to do a lot of work on myself. So yeah, I think those are probably right up there.

Katie: Great recommendations. And of course, I'm familiar with "The Four Hour Workweek", And I love it as well. But you're not the first person to mention, "Codependent No More." So I'm adding that into my reading list. That sounds like an amazing book.

Andy: It's not an easy one. Especially if you have, if you find out that you've been co-dependent in your life. That's was the big revelation for me, I'm like, what do I need this book for? In fact, I think I sat down to read it a couple times. And I got through the first chapter the first time, and I judged the hell out of it and said, well, this isn't me. I don't need to read this. And then, you know, I needed obviously needed a little bit more time to fail at things before I went back and read it again. And then I was like, oh yeah, this is what I've been doing.

Katie: Those are the best but hard for sure, but that's great. Is there a piece of advice that you would spread far and wide and give to everyone if you could?

Andy: You know, it's funny, I thought about this one too. And, you know, in fact, when you were on my podcast, we talked a little bit about this. I've learned over the years that advice giving is generally a bad idea

when it's not asked for. I know you're asking for it, for everybody. But I'm so attuned to not giving advice until somebody asks me. You know, is a request for advice and help, but I guess, if there was one thing that I would encourage people to take on, it would be being an explorer as opposed to being a researcher. Like do your research and find the information but then have the courage to take an action and have the courage to be wrong about the thing you try to fail, not to be wrong, but to fail and then to you know, get up, dust yourself off and then try again and try in a different little bit different way that works for you.

Because you develop when you do that a habit of being willing to experiment and explore and you also develop what works for you. So you get a chance to see you know, which I can recommend an exercise program but it's probably not the perfect thing for everybody in the world. So you get a chance to kind of figure out for yourself what that is. So yeah that's what I would say.

Katie: It's a great one, and a great point. I'm a huge fan of failure in life as well. I think that's how we learn the most, and like I said before, my hardest times, and my biggest failures ended up prepping me for wonderful things later on. So I think it's an underestimated and amazing life thing that we don't give enough credit to for sure. And as we wrap up, I wanna make sure people can also find you. And of course, the links will be in the show notes as well as the books you mentioned and everything you talked about. But for anyone who's just listening while driving, or maybe isn't gonna read the show notes, let people know where to find you online.

Andy: Yeah, the best place I mean, they're two places really is the wholelifechallenge.com. That's where you see and learn and hear and register for the Whole Life Challenge. And then my personal website is andypetranek.com and that's got, I do like a monthly newsletter and all my podcasts are up there. Podcasts are also on the Whole Life Challenge page but if somebody wants to reach out to me personally that's probably the best place to find me. I'm on Instagram and Facebook and Twitter as [@AndyPetranek](https://www.instagram.com/andypetranek). So that's also an easy place.

Katie: Wonderful. Andy, thank you so much for your time being here. I know you're busy, and I really appreciate you being here.

Andy: Thank you. Thanks for having me. It was really fun.

Katie: And thanks to all of you guys for listening and I hope to see you next time on the Wellness Mama Podcast.

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