



Episode 195: Saunacast: A Huge Announcement
From Mommypotamus & Wellness Mama

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is brought to you by Rael, the new organic and natural feminine care brand that is completely redefining the world of menstrual products. Their three female founders came together after experiencing a lack of healthy and functional period pads and liners available most places. Products that claimed to be healthy didn't hold up, and those that did hold up weren't exactly healthy. During their research, they found that pads and liners manufactured and sold by big drugstore brands were actually often made with extremely toxic ingredients like acetone, Styrofoam and other carcinogens that you don't want on your skin and especially not in a delicate place! You know those bright-white pads that have those blue designs running down the center, to look like that, they are heavily bleached and processed often with harmful chemicals to function a certain way. This is where Rael comes in. The company is on a mission to give women safe and healthy alternatives that don't sacrifice comfort or performance. This means that you can get the best of all worlds! Their pads and liners are sustainably made with 100% organic cotton, and they've become an Amazon Bestseller just a few months post-launch. They've since expanded their collection with biodegradable tampons, natural cleansers and wipes, menstrual underwear and even a Period Beauty line featuring facial masks and acne patches designed specifically to alleviate hormonal skin issues. The company and its founders are really trying to revolutionize menstrual care and what it means to look after ourselves and bodies, especially during that time of month, and they're excited to offer Wellness Mama listeners an exclusive discount to experience the difference firsthand! Visit GetRael.com to learn more and enjoy 15% off your first purchase with code WELLNESSMAMA.

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Katie: Hi, I'm Katie.

Heather: And I'm Heather.

Katie: And welcome to "The Wellness Mama SaunaCast" because we are joining you from inside of a quite hot sauna, and we're already dripping wet.

Heather: We are.

Katie: We'll see how long we last.

Heather: So we have a lot of important conversations in the sauna, some that have been recorded and some that have not. And something special that's gonna happen in this SaunaCast is that we're going to kind of revisit an old idea or an idea that was hatched in the sauna. Is that the right word, "hatched"?

Katie: I think so. I think that's an apt thing, especially because this one has taken like months to birth. It almost like, almost nine months. So there's some fun correlations of feeling like we're birthing an entire project baby.

Heather: Yeah, so maybe it was conceived in the sauna and not hatched.

Katie: There we go.

Heather: There you go.

Katie: We're hatching it now.

Heather: You're hatching it now. So we will touch more on that later. But I guess first, we should just do kind of an update because a lot has happened since we last recorded a SaunaCast.

Katie: A lot has, yeah, lots of changes for us individually and our families and business. And we'll touch on some of those soon. But I feel like some of our core topics that we kind of always touch on are the parenting and kids side because I know we both get a lot of questions about that. And that's also just a really important topic for both of us.

Heather: Mm-hmm, yeah. So I've read some books over the last nine or so months that I have loved. And a couple of those are the ones you recommended to me. So we were gonna kind of touch on some of those plus maybe some of your favorites.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. You wanna lead it off?

Heather: So one of my absolute favorites has been "How to Raise an Adult." And it's funny because the objective of the book as stated is like more focused on like how to get your kids in the right college. And I'm not even sure that, that's not really this objective that I came to the book with. I really just wanted to raise an adult, a person who enters adulthood feeling capable and having skills that are appropriate to that stage of life and feeling confident and basically not lost, because I think maybe it's just me. But I definitely entered adulthood seeing my parents model some really awesome things but not actually knowing how to do them for myself and having to figure that out on the fly and making a big mess of some of those things. And my husband had the same experience, too. The thing that I loved the most about the book, though, was that I was expecting a checklist of, like, more things I needed to do. But really, it was like the antidote to parent guilt because, really, the focus of the book was about how to help kids become more competent early in life and not stressing so much and not doing so much for them. And I could not believe it, like how compelling a case she made for doing less for our kids and for pulling back a little bit and not giving ourselves the guilt trip for not doing all these things and how that's actually better for them over time. I think that one should be retitled "The End of Mom Guilt." It was a good book.

Katie: I love that book so much, too. And it reminds me of a recent episode I did with Jim Kwik, and definitely a must listen if you guys haven't listened. But one of his points was it's not about how smart kids are but how our kids are smart because every kid is smart in their own way. And he said by like letting them have their boredom and have challenges early in life to work through, they're able to more easily hone in on their unique ways in which they're smart. And as moms, I know it also...like you said, it relieves us of that mom guilt because our kids are more self-sustaining and self-sufficient, and we don't feel guilty about not doing everything for them because we see how amazing and powerful they are when they're able to do things on their own.

Heather: Yes.

Katie: And my experience was so much like yours of my parents were very academically focused. And I'm grateful for all the opportunities they gave me within that. But I became sort of a trained poodle, like I was very good at academics. I could do all the academic hoops and I could take tests and I could pass all the things or get good scores. And it turns out that's not actually a valuable life skill at all. And I had to learn things like cooking and doing laundry and how to change a tire on a car as an adult. And I know we're both on the same page of that as far as...

Heather: Yeah. I mean, I joke but, I mean, it's not too far from the truth to say that when I got married, I knew how to make hamburger patties and spaghetti. I mean, I really did not... And that's not to say...I mean, I did know some things. My mom definitely made an effort, but I did not develop the discipline of really learning to cook and to put a full meal on the table and definitely not a healthy meal. So I had to learn it on the fly. And I wish that I had developed that skill earlier.

Katie: For sure. What do you feel like were some of the biggest positive things that they modeled that you took into adulthood?

Heather: Oh, gosh. I mean, a lot. I mean, my dad was very much...he valued academics and he valued learning. I mean, not really just the scores. I don't think he was really scores oriented, but he valued learning. And to this day, I feel like I have such a thirst to learn. My husband makes fun of me because I listen to, like, podcasts for fun. And he's like, "You know, you could relax." And I'm like, "I am relaxing. I'm learning about economics." And he's like, "That's not normal." "Freakonomics" or something like that, but fun. I love to learn and I definitely got that from him. My mom was very responsible, and she owned a business growing up. So she modeled like figuring things out. That was kind of her whole mantra was like, "Everything is figureoutable." And if she didn't know how to do something, that didn't bother her. She modeled that for me. But even though everything is figureoutable, and I think that's totally true, I personally think that I could have maybe developed some skills earlier so that I didn't have to figure it out on the fly because it was a little harder to do once I was in the middle and there were more things going on than just the ability to focus on that one thing.

Katie: For sure. And I know another Jim Kwik quote that I loved was, "If knowledge is power, then learning is a superpower." I feel like that's something that both of our parents did model for us pretty well and something that we wanna make sure we pass on to our kids because, we touched on this in a previous podcast, but I feel like their generation, they don't get it as easy as they can just learn a skill and do that skill for their whole life. Things are changing so quickly that they need to be able to think critically, learn quickly, connect dots where there are not dots. And I know that we both have things we do with our families to kind of encourage that, whether it be watching TED Talks with them or asking them questions every day, like, "What are you grateful for? What did you fail at? What hard questions did you ask today?" And just trying to kind of train their minds to start thinking that way. I know one thing that, like, the "How to Raise Adults" book brought up for me that was helpful was realizing like my own fear of failure. And that, again, is not the point of the book, but because I was good at academics, I was afraid to fail at things. And I think failure is an amazing opportunity and an amazing lesson. And so that's something I've tried to consciously pass on to my kids, is that failure is good as long as you learn from it.

Heather: Yeah, I definitely think that's one of the books that you can read because you wanna be a better parent but you walk away being a better person. So that was definitely one of my favorite books this year. Another one I liked was "Playborhood" just because it's practical. I mean, we're starting to get all of these, like there are a lot of top level researchers who are now saying like play is important, children aren't spending enough time outside, they need to engage. I mean, even at a physiological level, children need to like look outside and develop looking at distances for their eyes to develop properly. And also they're like, what is the word for the balance, the inner ear, the vestibular system, like we think of vestibular system as like, "Oh, well, kids can balance," but actually also has to do with things like emotional regulation. And we know that children need to like bounce and jump and roll and do all these things in order to develop, like, on a whole level. But doing that these days is, like, easier said than done. I mean, it's just, this is, the world is different, and engaging in outdoor play is not as, like, take...it's like it's not something you can take for granted. So "Playborhood" was really good for me in that it gave a lot of just the...it gave me the why. It really laid that out in a compelling way. And some things I didn't agree with, like he argues that in order to give kids more freedom that we should give kids cell phones. And he's like the safety data on cell phones isn't totally out yet. And I'm like, "Hmm, I'm probably not gonna give my young kids cell phones. I'm gonna choose a different approach to keep

an eye on them." But overall, I think he makes an amazing case for why we need to give kids more outdoor play, more freedom to create and some ways to implement that. So that was really awesome. I really loved it. And we haven't fully figured it out yet because we are not in a permanent home yet, we're building. Which I think we're gonna talk about later. But we're working toward an environment that fosters that kind of community for kids.

Katie: Yeah, I had the same reaction to the cell phone thing, especially after just recently, two interviews, one with a group called Operation Our Rescue...or Operation Underground Railroad, I believe, maybe. They rescue victims of sexual trafficking. In our episode they said, "The chance of your child being abducted in your own yard or your own neighborhood just playing outside is so small. It would, basically they'd have to stand there for about 750,000 years statistically to get abducted." But cell phones and technology are the top place that children are being targeted, especially through social media. And so I think there is a case for at least making sure that any cell phone use is very responsible and that we're watching that because that is where people are targeting children. It's not when they're playing outside. Also I did an interview about video game addiction, which I didn't even realize is becoming as widespread as it is.

But apparently, mobile gaming is the most addictive for kids because it's connected to their person. There's like a psychological effect of it being an extension of them and becoming part of their psyche and part of their social development. So I'm very much with you on the whole "Let's delay technology" until maybe they're driving and they actually need technology. But also this past weekend, I got to hang out with someone named Steven Kotler who wrote a couple books I love. We'll link to those, as well. And one was "Stealing Fire" and one is called "The Rise of Superman." But he's a co-founder of something called the Human Flow Project, I believe. And he studies the mental state of flow, which is basically when we get everything done, we're very high achievers, you have all five brain chemicals, all five positive brain chemicals firing at the same time. So you're getting like dopamine and norepinephrine and all the chemicals you need to feel great and function really well. But it's not a state that we can sustain all the time.

So his work has been all around how do you actually get into flow. And it turns out kids are experts at that if we let them play outside and like all the things you said, take risks and develop their vestibular system because he'd identified basically a cycle of four things that have to happen for flow. So the first one is you have to feel challenged or like a little bit out of your comfort zone. The golden ratio seems to be about 104% of your current capability, so just outside of your comfort zone. Then you're supposed to get to a point where you're completely frustrated and then like have a release where you like let go and don't focus on it for a second, which kids are genius at because they push really hard and then they're like, "Oh." They get frustrated and they walk away. But then if you're having some kind of movement during that time, which kids also do, then it helps you actually get into this state of flow, which he said, "Kids are biologically better to able to do because their prefrontal cortex is less developed." So they have less of the things that keep you from being able to go into that state.

Heather: Yeah, the chatter, the fear, the talking at yourself kind of thing.

Katie: Exactly, and then after that, you need like a recovery period of sleep, which kids are better at with napping or just going to bed earlier. But he said they studied all these populations. So extreme athletes, extreme poly athletes get into flow the easiest. So this is people who are like riding bikes down really steep mountains or skiing or surfing 100-foot waves, things I actually secretly hope my children don't do. But the second best are children, especially children who are either in Montessori or who are playing outside because those are both built into the cycle that kids naturally do. So I loved that about "Playborhood." And I know like we've both kind of adapted things in our lives to allow for more of those experiences for our kids.

Heather: Right, because it's not just a better child. You're creating neural pathways that they'll be able to use as an adult to create a sense of relaxed focus, so they're getting things done. They're getting them done well without the levels of stress and anxiety that we see. And when you're not in the flow state and you're trying to accomplish those same things. So, that's very cool.

Katie: Yeah. Okay. So what are some others?

Heather: Well, okay, this is not related but going back to my first one, how a book should leave you better, too. I feel like everything I've read by Brené Brown this year has been amazing for me. I feel like it's made me more empathetic with myself, gosh, how do I say this? I think I've had more honest conversations with myself, like there are some things I think I had believed or there's some narratives that I had kind of...some things I had said or defense mechanisms. That's what it was. Defense mechanisms that I've had for a long time that I pulled apart and they've made me kinder to myself and therefore kinder to everyone around me, especially, I think... My daughter is getting a little bit older. And I want her to see me be kind to myself. I definitely had that. My mom was the kind of woman, I never saw her like picking at herself or talking bad about how she looked or those kinds of things. And so I feel like I grew up relatively free of certain things like that. But nobody enters adulthood without picking up a few things, some of that negative self-chatter. So learning to do that has been really helpful. So everything by her, just link it.

Katie: Yeah. I especially love "Daring Greatly" because the title comes from that Theodore Roosevelt quote about the man in the arena whose face is marred by the sweat and the blood and basically like the credit goes to the people who have actually fought the fight. And I know for us, if we, speaking of Brené Brown, are willing to get vulnerable for a minute, like this online world is an amazing place and it's, truly we're both so grateful, I know you are, too, for the fact that every day, we get to, like, reach other people and to have this community of women that read our blog, and just like, there's so many amazing things about that. But also it's very hard, especially I feel like the online world gives so much anonymity to people, especially those ever coming from a place of pain or fear sometimes lash out in anger or in mean ways. I know I can speak from my own experience, like I have in a single day through social media gotten death threats, detailed descriptions of how someone was planning to sexually assault me and also just like very detailed critiques of my entire body and why it's not perfect. And any of those things alone are pretty rough. All three of those things in one day are really rough. And it's hard. It's hard to not, as women or as humans, not to recoil from that and not be willing to be vulnerable anymore and to put up walls. And for me, the last couple of years, and thanks partially to Brené Brown, is realizing just how thick of walls I had built around myself and the degree to which I was going to go to not have to go through that pain. But the problem is that cuts us off from relationships and community, too, because, like, she talks about so much, you actually need vulnerability to connect with people.

Heather: Yeah. And I think you and I have talked a lot about this because it's definitely been an ongoing thing. I've definitely experienced feedback that was just devastating to me at times, it's so incredibly painful to even read and there are comments I haven't even gotten through. I've actually learned that if a comment starts with the phrase, "I'm sorry, but..." that I just don't even read it because...my husband sometimes reads it and responds if it's needed. But, "I'm sorry, but," is like you just know it's coming. But it is really hard because I don't think I feel like I was wired for the level of feedback that is possible in this world, and yet at the same time, I feel like I'm beyond amazed at the opportunities of connection that we've been able to forge. So it's tough. We had a conversation earlier this year about how I made a list, and on that list, I put five people. And those five people are the people that I go to when I need real feedback in my life because everyone is gonna have an opinion. And all opinions are not equal. It's the people who see the full picture who you let into every aspect of your life and you've invited them to offer you that feedback. Those are the people that I choose to listen to. And then that other stuff, I'm getting better at it, but I'm trying to let it flow kind of like water, just right past me, and take what feels authentic and to take the other ones that are maybe rooted in pain or

something that's not related to me and realize that, "Yeah, I could pick that up and I could..." And sometimes it confirms something or like it confirms a worst fear about myself like the chatter in our minds. So I'll read something and I'm like, "Oh, I agree with that. I really am terrible." And my husband will be like, "That's not true. That's your inner mean girl talking to you and you can't let that happen." Yeah, it's an ongoing process. But community, a real life community, and the five people in my life that are on that list has been so essential to me being able to be better, not perfect but better at being authentic on a wider scale.

Katie: Yeah. I think you're right that those are the toughest, for sure, the toughest critical comments to hear are the ones that deeply touch our own insecurities because it's easy to lie to yourself or to hide that part of you until you're faced with it externally. I guess my encouragement to anybody listening would be, whether it's us or anybody online, like remember that you're talking to a real person, not just...because it's easy to hide behind social media and it's easier to say something in text or on social than in real life. And my hope and something I wanna write a lot more about in the future is just what if we all could become the model for the fact that you can disagree with someone and still be kind to them. And you can have a conversation where you don't agree on issues without name-calling or being mean. And what if we were kind and loving, especially when we don't agree with someone because certainly none of us have ever changed anyone's mind by arguing with them or by calling them names or putting them down in any way. We know it's not effective. It's still a defense mechanism. And I know I'm as guilty as anyone else. In the past, I've done that at times. But I also can now say from my own experience where the times I've lashed out like that, it's because of fear or anger or pain that was in my own past and almost never about the other person. So what if we can all, like to Brené's point, take ownership of that and be a little vulnerable and be able to be kind even when it's hard and be able to disagree in a kind way and have the hard conversations without having to resort to personal attacks? So, yeah, everything by Brené Brown, all of them.

Heather: Do you have any favorite books? I had one that I haven't finished yet, "Barefoot..." What is it?

Katie: "Barefoot and Balanced," I think it is?

Heather: Yes. You've read that one.

Katie: Yeah, I love that one, too. It touches on some of the same points as "Playborhood" and "How to Raise an Adult" but really just about how psychologically kids are being harmed by not having enough of those normal childhood experiences that many of us had, both because there's more to do inside these days and also they're just not really being allowed the same freedom. It talks about things like the vestibular system and how they need to climb things and jump off things and run really fast till they're almost too scared, they're scared because they're going so fast or go down a hill really fast on a bike, that all of those things develop important parts of the brain, and that when we don't have those experiences, we're actually stunting that part of a growth. And it talks about how, for instance, phobias don't come from experiences. It's easy to think like, "Oh, you become afraid of something by having a bad experience with that thing." But it turns out it's actually the lack of an experience that makes a phobia, it's the lack of ever being in water makes someone afraid to swim, not actually a near drowning experience or the lack of climbing things and jumping off of things creates a fear of heights, not actually having been up at heights. And so that just reframed for me the way that I looked at my kids having experiences and just trying to think through rationally like, "Okay. They could fall out of a tree and they might break an arm and that's the worst that can happen. They're not gonna die." But there are also, the positive here is they're developing parts of their brain that are gonna serve them really well in adulthood. And so this is a time when I can take a deep breath and not tell them to be careful and not...every time they do something and let them learn through trial and error and through sometimes falling down. Let's see. Another one that I'm not done with but I like so far is called "The Four Agreements." So far it's really just helping reframe kind of that like mental stress and vulnerability side a little bit. And one of the points is like, for instance, "Be impeccable with your word," or, and another is, "Don't take everything personally," just things like that that are really good reminders. It's a very short and easy read but it's been a good one.

Heather: Impeccable with your word?

Katie: Yeah.

Heather: Huh. So what does that look like? Does that just mean be a person of your word or is it being clear with what you're saying?

Katie: Yeah, exactly, so both, making sure you're honest all the time, which doesn't mean you have to say everything that's on your mind. I've definitely met people who thought that honesty meant they had to be...

Heather: Full disclosure.

Katie: ...radically disclosing everything at all times. I think there is the balance there. If what you're going to say isn't going to benefit anyone and it has the potential to hurt someone, there is a time and a place to not say everything that's on your mind. But it's basically about being honest with yourself and with those you love the most about just through the way you live and the way you speak and kind of going back to the walls and not hiding parts of yourself, and just kind of embracing that fully in an authentic way.

Heather: Got it, cool.

Katie: Yeah. Let's see. The next thing we're gonna talk about was, I guess, all of our big life transitions. We can talk about the fact that we both moved, which we touched on in a previous episode, but we live now very close together, which is awesome, and because of the move, you're getting to build a house, which is amazing.

Heather: Yeah, it wasn't on purpose. We actually found a house and tried to buy it and actually, it became the subject of a legal issue that wasn't related to us at all. So we ended up not buying it. And I told my husband, I was like, "I don't wanna build a house because I don't wanna make all those decisions." And if I was gonna build a house, then I would want to research and do things better than your typical build site. But it ended up being the best option for us. So we're taking things slow, and I'm researching and doing my best to learn and hopefully be able to share how I prioritized what we're gonna do differently and what just didn't work out in our budget because I'm never gonna let perfect be the enemy of good. And for us, we're not gonna be able to build, like, a perfect house, like we're not gonna be able to use every perfect material that's available because it's just not on our budget. But there are things that we're doing differently that we're trying to prioritize. And we're actually in the last kind of stages where we're deciding what things that we can reasonably incorporate into the build. But it's been a really interesting experience.

And I definitely feel like we need to have more conversations between people who care about the environment and people who care about human health because the biggest thing that's tripped us up is that when you talk green building, sometimes the green building movement is using a lot of materials that are recycled or in some ways are helping the environment but maybe not optimal for human health and vice versa. Like, we want materials that are non-toxic to people but also have a low footprint. So we're doing our best to navigate that. And I will share what I've learned as we sort of move into the actual finalizing process. And when we finally get built, whenever that is, I'll give you guys a tour.

Katie: Yeah. And we have kind of the opposite thing. So we moved based on community aspects. We knew some people where we've moved now and also knowing that like my parents would move eventually as well and this would be a place that they could retire. But we bought a house thinking it would be a temporary house for us and we would eventually build a house. And we accidentally landed in an amazing neighborhood that's full of amazing people and went through this phase of like, "Well, would we leave this place to build our house?" And our kids are so happy here, back to all the points about children playing outside and having community and social experiences. There's about 30 kids in our neighborhood. And from the second the kids get off school, they're all outside climbing trees, riding bikes. I actually put...so I have an aura ring, and it fits

on my oldest son's finger. And so I put my ring on him for a few days to see just the level of activity and deep sleep that they're getting based on this, because the aura ring, unlike other trackers, it can go into airplane mode. So I didn't wanna have like EMFs or a Bluetooth device on my kids at all times. And it turns out they're running 10 to 13 miles on average per day, 16 on days when they feel like trying to see how far they can run. And that doesn't include biking or tree climbing. And all the parents in the neighborhood are people that we get along with. And it has that 1950s feel of community where there's like dinner parties or we all get together and just spend time. All the kids play outside. And the kids are playing capture the flag in the dark or occasionally challenging us to play capture the flag. And we realize just how bad our VO2 max capacity is now.

And so our plan was that my parents would move into this house after we built. And my parents went through a phase of like, "Well, we don't know if we wanna live in a neighborhood with that many kids." And so we're like, "We can't move. We can't leave this, especially if my parents won't be here so the kids can't come back and play." So we decided to temporarily and permanently, for now, put building on hold. And then my parents decided they actually did like this neighborhood. So now they live here, too. So it really is like the 1950s. And then there's some days it feels a little bit like "Everybody Loves Raymond" or like it's some fun dynamics at times, but it's been amazing. So we're actually not building like we were planning to. So you get to have the building experience, but because it wasn't a house that we thought was gonna be our permanent house, there definitely is some remodeling and stuff we'll do over time and even as we're researching just things like painting, bring up a lot of points of trying to find a paint that is low VOC which is well known but also low SVOC, and that's not as well known. Or when it comes to EMFs, we had some EMF issues in the house that we had to mitigate. So we've had to, like, retroactively put things like shielding and like a kill switch on our power and like things we didn't really plan on having to do.

Heather: But they make such a huge difference. We didn't install a kill switch because we are in a rental situation while we're building. But we actually are turning off some of the breakers. It's a brand new breaker. I spoke with a EMF expert who is like, "If you have an old breaker, it's not always a good idea to keep flipping things on and off because that can cause issues and you want to be as safe as possible." But if it's a brand, brand new breaker, doing it for a very short amount of time like we're doing is okay. But we started just flipping off some things and the breaker and our sleep was so different, so measurable. The reason I know is because I had one child that kept waking up. You know how weird we are. I mean, you and I have stood in my future neighborhood with like all the weird measuring tools and like we're like, you know, got our hands out and measuring everything that looked like we're looking for aliens. So we did that to our house and it turns out that child's room was just really, really high in like all of the EMF type situation. It was just like a EMF hotspot. So now when we turn it off, sleep is amazing and it's totally worth it. Working in a house where you have existing issues and identifying those issues is just a totally different thing but just as challenging as trying to build because you have to just sort of like find them. And it's not always obvious what you need to look for.

Katie: Absolutely. And I know we both know the EMF issue is a big one that's continuing to grow in importance but thankfully, there are also things like that that's free to do, like flipping breakers is free or you can get a kill switch which is not that expensive.

Heather: Yeah, they're not that expensive. You don't need even really...like, you can install some of them, I think, yourself.

Katie: You can, yeah, or even just things like baby steps, like putting a \$10 timer on your Wi-Fi at night and taking it down when you're sleeping anyway, makes such a big difference and that's almost free. That's like two cups of coffee and you're protecting yourselves so much while you're sleeping. I mean, it's frustrating that I feel like we have to navigate so much and you're right that that dichotomy between green eco-friendly and human healthy. I hope that's gonna be the next thing, because like we've talked about before like when we first started, none of this stuff existed. You couldn't buy certain foods in grocery stores that now you can. So

I'm hoping in the next 5 to 10 years, we're gonna see actual innovative solutions for the EMF thing that take into account the eco-friendly side and also the human health side and for all aspects of building.

Heather: I hope so. And we will share our experience so that maybe we can help bring people together and they can solve those problems.

Katie: Exactly. The other part of this...I know the move for both of us has just been a focus on community. And I think partially maybe it's a natural human reaction as we get older just realizing just how important people and relationships and community are. And we've talked about this in passing before, but just knowing the statistics about, like community literally is one of the most important things you can do for your health and it's something worth being proactive about. And it doesn't have to be expensive. It can be totally free. It's just that's got to become a priority for all of us and looking at how detached the modern world is and knowing things like that having strong relationships and community is more important for your health than quitting smoking or than exercising or than all these things that we're like stressing ourselves out to do. And it's also one of the common factor of all the Blue Zones.

Heather: Right. I feel like it's the most unappreciated factor because I think people assume that if you're feeling great that those relationships flow naturally. But I think it's really the reverse that there's so many things you can be doing right, but the connections, if you don't have those connections, then somehow, I don't know, your stress levels stay high. I don't know exactly what it is. But for us, community has become a greater focus. I feel like it's more important than a lot of the choices that we have dedicated so much of our energy to.

Katie: Yeah. And I think that's something because I...you probably get some of these comments, as well, and I know I have, of just people who are upset with the way the culture really endorses alcohol for women. And I think there's several facets to this conversation. One is which I agree that we should not be encouraging alcohol consumption as an outlet or to avoid stress because, really, what you need to be addressing is the stress. But like, for instance, the Blue Zones, there's regular consumption and very moderate amounts of things like wine as part of their culture. So we know that there are correlations with long term health benefits. And to me, that's part of the conversation that I've wanted to bring up, is just that in and of itself, alcohol is not bad. The data shows that there can be definitely a time and a place for it in moderation, but the overuse of alcohol or binge drinking or, we're seeing more of that. And I think especially for women, that goes back to stress so much. And it's not isolated to alcohol. We're also seeing women abuse sugar a lot more or binge eat or do other things out of stress as an outlet rather than addressing the stress with things like community or just getting things off of our plates more or getting back to the basics of family life and letting our kids play outside.

Heather: I feel like that's two things, like when you say stress, the two words that I'm sort of reading into that are loneliness and a sense of expectations, like high expectations we sometimes feel like have been placed on us, this whole, like, supermom mythos. "Mythos"? What's the word? How do you say that? I don't know. I do think that loneliness can play a huge factor because we do see the curated lives of other people and then we assume that our messy days are messy in and of themselves and that we're having that experience alone, and then also do feel like there are a lot of expectations that they're in out there. When we come together and we risk vulnerability in a wise way...Brené Brown talks a lot about not just being vulnerable to everyone but choosing to be vulnerable, to tell your story to people who have really earned the right to hear it. But we seek those people out and we consistently stay close to them, then...I feel like that's the most protective thing that we can do in terms of dealing with stress. I mean, there are lots of things, like I definitely think adaptogens are helpful and those kinds of things are helpful but a good conversation with a friend and having those friends that you can show up, like we currently are drenched in sweat and, like, what are we wearing? Workout clothes and no makeup. And where that's, like, you're normal, we don't have to like do anything to meet up is a huge factor.

This podcast is brought to you by Rael, the new organic and natural feminine care brand that is completely redefining the world of menstrual products. Their three female founders came together after experiencing a lack of healthy and functional period pads and liners available most places. Products that claimed to be healthy didn't hold up, and those that did hold up weren't exactly healthy. During their research, they found that pads and liners manufactured and sold by big drugstore brands were actually often made with extremely toxic ingredients like acetone, Styrofoam and other carcinogens that you don't want on your skin and especially not in a delicate place! You know those bright-white pads that have those blue designs running down the center, to look like that, they are heavily bleached and processed often with harmful chemicals to function a certain way. This is where Rael comes in. The company is on a mission to give women safe and healthy alternatives that don't sacrifice comfort or performance. This means that you can get the best of all worlds! Their pads and liners are sustainably made with 100% organic cotton, and they've become an Amazon Bestseller just a few months post-launch. They've since expanded their collection with biodegradable tampons, natural cleansers and wipes, menstrual underwear and even a Period Beauty line featuring facial masks and acne patches designed specifically to alleviate hormonal skin issues. The company and its founders are really trying to revolutionize menstrual care and what it means to look after ourselves and bodies, especially during that time of month, and they're excited to offer Wellness Mama listeners an exclusive discount to experience the difference firsthand! Visit GetRael.com to learn more and enjoy 15% off your first purchase with code WELLNESSMAMA.

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Katie: I have written a post before called "You Can't Out Supplement a Poor Diet." And I think even more importantly, you can't out supplement, out diet, or out exercise a stress level or lack of community, like I think, really, truly that is one of our core human desires that we've lost so much in the modern world. And you've hit the nail on the head as far as we have this overwhelm and expectation as moms of all these things we're supposed to do. But also the modern world for all of our "connectivity" is very lonely at times. The irony being like social media is not very social at all. And it's so hard to then prioritize real life face time with people. I think that's gonna be a huge factor for our generation, especially for our kids' generation because I think that's, we're seeing kids with an even more difficult time doing that because of technology. And I know this is something that for us has been both a personal journey but also something that we want to model in the world and to make more prominent as something, as an issue for women and families and human beings, which brings us to kind of our exciting updates and news. I feel like you should get to share this.

Heather: Oh, my gosh. Okay. See, when you did that, my brain, like all of the stuff just flew out of it. It is, like I do, I see myself like and I...there is no judgment for this, like there have been times where I got smashed, like, by some comment or whatever online. And all of a sudden like for an hour, I'm like emotionally restabilizing, and my kids are right there in front of me watching this. They know something's wrong. I'm not communicating maybe the whole like I'm not reading them the comment, but they've seen this. They've seen the impact of the online world. But what has made such a difference like over the time that you and I we met, since we met, has been my resilience, my ability to bounce back from that. And I want them to live in a world

where it's very clear to them that real life relationships always hold a weight and there's an authenticity in a connection that's possible when they invest in those people and invest in having those kinds of conversations. For years, you and I have been meeting up to do all kinds of weird things. I mean, if there was a weird thing that could be done and it was close enough for us to both get to, we were like doing it and we were living life and sort of working behind the scenes to help each other out, to collaborate, to see what we could do to kind further the mission that we both had. But it's hard because we both were sort of running, doing things separately and it's a lot of work. I'll let you speak to that. You wanna speak to that?

Katie: Yeah. It's been fun to, but difficult at times to navigate as friends because we're 100% in each other's corners and obviously, like we're each other's biggest fans and like always are encouraging each other. But logistically, in some ways, we were also kind of like online competitors. We never thought of it in that way. But we had sites that are competing or like there are only so many keywords and there's only so many posts that can be written about body butter and whatever. So there was like overlap there. And I know we had to like, we've had all these weird ways to navigate that where we don't read each other's blogs or like...

Heather: Oh, yeah, like not at all. Like, there would be...I would google something I wanna learn about. Your site would come up and I couldn't read it because if I did, it might get stuck in my brain and then I would be worried I would accidentally recycle it.

Katie: And we already shared a brain. We already feel like, we'd like jokingly say that we share a brain.

Heather: Right. I mean, we've published similar posts on the same day, I think, where it'll go out and I'll be like, "Oh." And usually seasonal but there it is, like they would just be out there.

Katie: We've even shown up in the same type of outfit before or the same color shirt or like, but totally unplanned.

Heather: Bought the same things off of Amazon and walked into each other's houses and been like, hey, like with all the things you can find on Amazon, we would choose the same thing. So we've been doing this behind the scenes for a while and, gosh, sometime around the New Year, we were sitting in a sauna where we have a lot of our important conversations.

Katie: Ended up being a very long sauna conversation.

Heather: Really, really long.

Katie: Even longer than this one. We were so sweaty and then we, of course, logically we rehydrated with, I think, Prosecco.

Heather: Well, we had to celebrate.

Katie: We had to. We did because...

Heather: But we did have water.

Katie: We did have water, too, yes. We didn't just...

Heather: So are we doing this?

Katie: I think we are. This is the big moment. I feel like we need a drumroll.

Heather: We were in the sauna and we...you, you gotta say it.

Katie: So we conceived this idea of what if instead of like even just logistically competing, what if we combined forces and could really become...and hopefully model for other women in this world, a very real aspect of

community and supporting each other and lifting each other up and being on the same team? And the logistical way that we figured out to do that was through basically combining the forces of our websites.

Heather: So this is kind of a two...this is two things. One is we get to spend more time together because we get to collaborate instead of doing a lot of the same things separately, which was a huge thing and one of the awesome benefits of living close to each other, but also there was this aspect that MommyPotamus was a name that my husband nicknamed me a long time ago. And over time, it started to feel like less and less of a fit because there was a time in which it felt like the right thing because it sort of was light-hearted at a time when I was choosing to embrace life when I had been sort of kind of hanging back before that. But also it was only a partly true iteration of who I really am. I think there was a part of me that thought that if I really stepped into who I...if I really revealed who I am, which is a serious, light-hearted but intense person who is research driven and listens to podcasts about weird sciency things for fun that I would find that I didn't have anywhere to belong. And so I kind of held back the more serious side of me. And as I've gotten into this, I find that the thing that's most rewarding for me is to be talking to researchers behind the scenes, and I'm emailing with like MIT researchers in my free time. But the name of my site was so not serious that I would get people that would email me and say things like, "Man, I really wanna share your article with my doctor, but I don't think he's gonna listen to anyone called the MommyPotamus." And I was like, "Yeah, I kind of agree with you." It felt like a good fit for a time and then it stopped feeling like a good fit. And so I was kind of looking for a name and thinking through that. And that's what we were sort of talking through as one of the things when...it just occurred to us that maybe this was the time where it made sense for us to partner together because choosing a new name is a challenge, especially when all the names that you might choose are taken by your closest friends.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely, and realizing just, too, the power of strength in numbers and how much stronger we could be together because both of us got into this as both a hobby and a passion and wanting to change things and never really, I don't think, fully realized in the beginning just how much of a job we were stepping into as far as it takes a lot to run a business. And there's a lot of logistical stuff that is beyond just the writing part that we both love or beyond the creating content. And so to run that separately, like there's just so much more logistics whereas now by combining, we're able to support each other more fully. We have a team that helps as well, which lets us hopefully create more content, and better content, and be able to connect with all of you better, and hopefully also less stress on our side, plus, like back to the earlier point. The community part is so important and we keep seeing increasing divisiveness in the world and just people segmenting into all these factions and not being able to truly connect. So that's another thing we're hoping that we can be a model in a small way, is the importance of supporting each other in community.

Heather: Absolutely. And I'm so excited about this because I feel like we have...our conversations have spurred so many creative things that we've done separately but now we get to actually use that energy to kind of combine our efforts and do more. So I am very, very excited and grateful because obviously, this isn't just about a name switch. That's not really... I was kind of sharing that just as an aside because this is an opportunity to become more fully ourselves, like to step into more authenticity. For me, it's about stepping forward and being willing to say, "Hey, I am a mom, but I also know stuff," and not trying to couch it or not trying to couch it in a way that says, "It's okay if you don't take me seriously," because as moms, we don't have to hold degrees to be taken seriously. Our gut and our instinct is in many ways what's driving the trends toward health, the things that we're seeing. I mean, moms were talking about the gut-brain connection like five years before we started seeing mainstream articles on it. And I think it's okay to step forward and say like, "Hey, we're moms and we know stuff. We don't know everything, but we're willing to learn." And having that curiosity and that willingness to learn and partner with doctors is essential to turning around some of the trends that we're seeing in health overall. So there's that. But also there's the community aspect because being this out there, like we've talked about, can be a vulnerable place. So doing it together allows us to be

more real with you guys because we're more real with each other. And so when we're sitting here recording podcasts, it all gets easier to invite you into our community that we've been kind of living in for years now.

Katie: Yeah, and to your point about like tackling those problems, and there's so much more even than 10 years ago when we started that our generation and our kids' generation are facing in the world. And so by combining forces, we're hopefully able to help provide resources to stop that because, like I know we've both talked about individually, we're kind of no longer at a point where we can just maintain the status quo and do everything in moderation and maintain health, unfortunately, like there's so many negative inputs. There's plastic everywhere. There's pesticides everywhere. There's EMFs everywhere like in increasing numbers that we do have to be more proactive. And women are the ones leading that charge, especially moms. And so we wanna really be able to step into keeping up with the research on that and providing resources because our kids really do face a lot. And I know that was, for both of us, both personally and on a bigger level, part of the reason we have written for this long and why we care so much is just realizing what our kids face. So logistically, that means that over the next few months, hopefully, depending on how long it will take us to do it, but...

Heather: Our tech husbands have to facilitate the actual...

Katie: Yes, we get to do lots of writing hopefully, and they are gonna be working on merging all of the content. So Heather will become very much a part of Wellness Mama and an equal Wellness Mama on the site and her articles will be there, as well. And we'll both be able to create new articles and new podcasts. And if we get really brave, maybe even videos. We've talked about scary videos. But back to the vulnerability thing, YouTube commenters can be very, very mean.

Heather: Oh, man. I think we should do one of those mean tweets videos one day where we just read YouTube comments because those are way meaner than the tweets that I've seen.

Katie: It's true. Actually, like on that note, I went to a conference this year. We both did actually, and there was something called the Insanity Awards where you were supposed to read your meanest comments. So I had someone on our team help me compile because I don't see all of them or I would never, I would just cry all the time. I had her compile a list of, like, the top 50 for the last year. And I got through like the first 20 of them before I realized, "There's no way I can't read these out loud. I'm gonna stop now." But we should do that.

And the other exciting part of this that we can share is that with having a little bit more bandwidth, we've also realized there's huge needs in the market for essential, like family essential products that are truly good that work and that also are safe, and whether that be toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, baby products, these are all things that, there are some great ones out there that are either natural or that work really well. But it's hard to find ones that do both really well. And you and I have both been working on recipes for some of these things for so many years that we're now really excited to be able to...we're in the process of creating a company that will make these products widely available online and in traditional retail so that moms have options that are both affordable but that work and toothpaste that actually kind of foams and shampoo that bubbles and the things that people want, but without having to sacrifice either health or it working.

Heather: Yeah. So that's very exciting and definitely a huge undertaking. So I'm glad that we're doing it together.

Katie: Absolutely, so lots of big changes coming. Both, for us, I know personally, we've talked about all of our changes and now the business. But it's super exciting to finally get to tell you guys we've been sitting on this secret for, gosh, like nine months now, right?

Heather: Yep.

Katie: It turns out that it's actually kind of logistically hard to merge completely, like, separate businesses. So we had to learn some legal education along the way and so, like, realize that contracts can take months and months. And we're finally excited to be able to actually just jump in and share with you and start working together.

So that was our big update. Thank you guys for sticking with us for this long. I'm sure we had this for 50 minutes which, considering we're in a sauna, we are actually...there's a puddle underneath us at this point. So we are going to now go rehydrate but keep an eye out for all the fun changes coming soon and some other new surprises that'll be coming in the next few months. And like we always say, we're so grateful to all of you guys for sharing your time and your energy with us. It means a whole lot. It's your most valuable resource and we don't take that lightly. So thank you for listening, and we hope to see you again on the next episode.

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