



Episode 200: Most Important Thing for Health
With Heather and Katie

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Heather: Hi, welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." This is Heather with wellnessmama.com.

Katie: And I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com.

Katie: Got it. So, we thought it would be appropriate for the 200th episode to recap some of the top takeaways from the last 100 episodes since I did a recap at the 100th episode. But also, we thought it would be really fitting based on our own recent big news and feedback we've gotten from you guys to also talk about what we think is probably the most important factor when it comes to health, and we've said it before, and that's community. Because it's something that really has been driven home for both of us personally in the last couple of weeks, and we wanted to share a little bit of our story and kind of an update from the ground in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, and also just talk about the lessons that we're seeing here on the ground and the real beauty of that. So, Heather, do you wanna kinda give an overview of what's happened in our lives the last couple of weeks?

Heather: Sure. Well, I announced on "Mommypotamus" that I was moving over to "Wellness Mama," and you and I would be co-blogging there. And one of the things I mentioned in that post is that loneliness is a higher risk factor than obesity, smoking, and high blood pressure, you know, in terms of its effect on our health. And that can be true even if we don't necessarily feel lonely, which I think a lot of us really maybe don't realize, that we go through periods where we're getting most of our connection via social media. And I'm definitely in favor of that, I'm on social media quite a bit.

But having real people in your life that can come dig you out of a hole is also really important. Because, I don't know, not all people have the same style of communication, but when I get really stressed, I stop communicating. I kind of go internal and focus inward and stop asking for help. And so, having people in my life who recognize that in me...I know you've done this before, Katie, you've been like "You're going to lunch with me this week," you know. Getting me out and helping me see things in a different light is one aspect.

There's like almost a safety net to having people in your real life who can see those signs when you're unable to communicate them. That isn't possible as much with social media.

So, all that to say we had that opportunity over this past week to experience our community on a deeper level, because we both ended up evacuating ahead of the hurricane. And we all evacuated together with family and... well, friends, not family, and we were all kind of waiting to hear news about whether or not we would have homes to come home to, but it was an interesting experience. I'm gonna let you share a little bit about it here.

Katie: Yeah, it was definitely...it really struck me the last couple of weeks seeing both sides of that. So, like you said, we both, our families and some friends also all had to evacuate, and we ended up in the same place a few hours away, basically just renting hotel rooms, and bunkering down with basic supplies. And the irony was just seeing the hurricane build. Because originally, like, our area typically does not get hit hard by hurricanes, nobody was really worried. I know the first two days, we really knew it was gonna probably hit us. I was still, like, "Oh, we're not gonna evacuate. It's just a hurricane, it's fine."

And then an evacuation suggestion came out and we're like, "I think we're still okay." And then a mandatory evacuation order was released, which basically means, if you stay, you will likely not have water, or power, because they often turn those off proactively, and emergency services are not going to come get you in the midst of the hurricane if something goes wrong. So really, at that point, we realized with kids you have to get out at that point. And that was...even then, I don't think we fully realized what we might be facing, because I think at that point, it was still considered a category two or maybe it was going to be a three when we actually left. And then over the period of the next 24 hours, it escalated to a category 4, and even there were ground reports of it registering category 5 winds, which had never hit this area.

And I think if I'm remembering by the time it was all said and done, it ended up being the third worst hurricane to ever hit the United States, based on wind speed and pressure at time of landfall. And because of that, we left relatively quickly. I know we basically took a few days' worth of clothes, and for us, like our laptops, things that were needed for work, and a few things that were really irreplaceable.

But that was the first interesting moment for me was realizing as we were leaving...and at that point, we still pretty much thought we'd have a home to come back to hopefully when it was still just a category two. But like having to think through what things are actually most important that I wanna take them with me, and it really ended up being fewer things than I anticipated. But then once we had evacuated, and it was increasing, there became a much more real chance that the devastation was going to be worse than we thought.

And sitting in that hotel and kind of watching on the news and continuing to get these alerts on our phone that sound like amber alerts, but they're hurricane alerts, and just that whole process, really reinforced just how important and how life-changing community is. Because I can't imagine, and I know there were people there who were, but I can't imagine facing that alone. I can't imagine sitting in those hallways, waiting for updates, feeling very powerless, which I think is a lesson in and of itself. But truly, just being at the mercy of that storm and having to be okay with the fact that there might be nothing left when we went home.

And I know we're both super grateful that we got to go home to our homes and there was minimal damage. But for some of our neighbors just a few miles away, that was not the case. And having now been to more the center of where it hit, it truly looks like a bomb went off. I can't even really put into words what it looks like, it's horrific. It's one of the most horrific things. I went and helped after Harvey and Katrina when I was younger, and the devastation was similar, but some of the areas here are more ground zero of where the storm hit and are even worse than what I saw during those storms.

I wasn't at ground zero for those. But just seeing the devastation and seeing things like kids walking around with no shoes in rusty metal, or splintered trees, or like our sweet mailman for our neighborhood, our kids all, like, love him and have made friends with him, and a tree fell on his home. And he still had to keep working because, in order to have money to repair his home, he had to have income. And his wife was even helping him on his route, and they had to leave their home in order to do that. And there's a real possibility of looting at this point.

And so, a lot of people from our neighborhood went and helped get the tree off his house and helped board it back up so his home could at least be safe. And just seeing the beauty of that, I think that's what really has struck me so much these last couple of weeks. It's just unfortunately how often it takes something this horrible to bring out the best in people, but also how amazing it is when you see that, when you see the whole community come together, and form these bonds and pitch in regardless of politics, or race, or religion, or any differences that seem so unimportant at that point, and just people bringing food to each other, and giving anything that you can.

I know we've sent our generator, we've sent tarps, we've sent food, and water and toiletries, and diapers, and dog food. It's just been so striking to see the beauty of that community rising up, and it's also really struck me personally. I already knew from the research the health reasons on why community is so important, and I knew from things like our friendship, I knew just how personally important those things were. But to realize sitting in that hotel with all of us that we truly could lose everything physical that we owned, but at the end of the day, that's not the important stuff. And it would, of course, be a long process to rebuild, but that at the end of the day, that was okay, because even if that was gonna happen, we were gonna face it together.

So, we're very grateful that we didn't have to face loss of our homes, and I know we're both also very grateful that we now have a place to be able to offer assistance to others and to bring people in when they need food. and to be able to send anything that we have, because certainly so many were not so lucky. But I wish I could even put it into words better just how deeply it struck me in that moment, sitting in that hotel, just literally waiting to see if our home would be okay, just how important that community piece felt when everything else might disappear.

Heather: Yeah, definitely, and there was not a whole lot of sleep throughout the night. So I remember I wake up at 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, 5:00, and I'm checking the forecasts and we're looking at these very, very small fractional things. But everything feels so different in that moment, and yet, the community that we have, it was amazing how it held us together in ways, our children were all playing together. And when things are really difficult, it's easy to get snappy, if you're under a lot of stress you're trying to maybe handle a lot of high-level stuff. Maybe you're trying to coordinate larger stuff.

And when you have a community together, it gels in such a beautiful way. Like, our kids were playing, we were able to do the things that we needed to do. And you know, our kids still think that we kind of went on a special trip, because, I don't know, it just brought out what was most important which was being together and being safe. But you and I both talked a lot because you mentioned looting which is really sad. And it's easy to judge, I'm not saying that there's a right or wrong in every single circumstance. Sometimes people are legitimately looking for very important supplies or food, or, you know...because their situation is really desperate in some areas. So, I'm not here to make a blanket statement. I think that sometimes tragedies like this, they bring out the very best and the very worst.

Communities can kind of be defined by a shared hope or, you know, sharing our greatest fears. And these types of situations tend to bring out both. But it is really beautiful when people come together. And you and I have been trying to kind of figure out what it is that has brought so much of a sense of kindness and

community, and we kinda came up with a couple of things. One being that normal life is suspended, and so you know, when we're out of our day to day, it gives us an opportunity to see things from a different perspective, and to see people from a different perspective.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's an interesting thing too, like even the time we were in the hotel or certainly now, things are not definitely back to normal or anywhere close. Even though our homes are okay now, there are still so much infrastructure going on. And I think any time there's a pattern interrupt it helps you to work through things, but especially anything on this level. On a very real level, like, I know we talked about a little bit, like when you're not arguing about taking up the trash because there's no trash to take out, or when it's more of like getting shelter over your head, taking care of those basic human needs. You're able to have that common focus and to work through the normal things, rather than getting stuck in those day to day hassles.

Heather: Right, because in some ways we're sharing a common threat or enemy, you know, because the enemy is not having a home to sleep in, or, you know, being exposed in those kinds of things. So it definitely does bring people together. And that's not to say that taking out the trash isn't an important part of being part of the community, it is... I mean when we all share responsibilities, that's a big part of it. But being taken out of that, shaking things up can give you a different perspective.

And also, I think in this podcast we're gonna talk about, you know, what's getting in the way of community all the time. Like, how can we bring some of the things from an event like this into our daily lives to make our daily lives better? So, what's getting in the way and how can we foster community? Another one I think that we both talked about was just that this is the ultimate in vulnerability. It's not possible to really be in community without vulnerability, but nobody really likes to have to do that. It's hard, it's always hard.

But here, in this particular time and place, vulnerability is not optional. We're all vulnerable because we feel it at, like, a primal level. And so, when people come through for you and when people are there for each other, it brings out an amazing sense of love and kindness that we don't necessarily experience in day-to-day life, because we have more shields. Now that's not to say that those are necessarily bad all the time. Like, we don't necessarily need to be vulnerable at Target at 3:00 in the afternoon, like, with whoever is just walking by. But we do need to have people in our lives that we can be vulnerable with on a regular basis. It's essential for our own personal health.

Katie: Yeah, I think this is such an important point because that's what you and I have been sort of wrestling with these last few days, is why does it take disasters? Like, why do we have to have horrible things happen to bring out these amazing human traits? And why is it that in those times, it seems so easy to pitch in, and to help our neighbor, and to love each other, and to ignore those small things that don't seem important? And is there a way to do that without having to go through a hurricane, or a fire, or an earthquake, or a tornado, or any kind of horrific event? Can we figure out how to bring those things into our daily lives?

And I know one thing that you and I have both read a lot about in the last couple of years, and it's increasingly important and increasingly still difficult, doesn't get easy just because you know it's important, but is vulnerability. And you mentioned that that's one of the key components of real community, and I think that's also one of the hardest to overcome. I think in today's world, there's so much of a focus on being independent, and being strong, and being able to take care of yourself, which, again, those are not bad things, but they have to be balanced with vulnerability, and being able to be real, and to be vulnerable with those that you love. And I think when it comes to having trouble building community that can be one of the biggest struggles to get through, is because it takes a conscious effort in today's world to be vulnerable.

I think other things just in normal life, we're so busy in today's world, and I know we've talked about this in past episodes of just creating more time and more bandwidth for family time, for downtime, for unstructured free play time. But I feel like this busyness and overwhelm is such an enemy of community, because it makes it logistically difficult to even have time to build relationships. But also, just that mental stress, it makes it hard to be vulnerable, it makes it hard to relate to people, and that's a really difficult thing to overcome in normal life.

And that's another thing that right now is suspended, because in the face of a disaster, there's not the normal extracurricular activities and you're not running to school, you're taking care of your basic human needs. And one of those needs that becomes so much more prominent is the need for other people and for relationship. Do you wanna talk about social media? I know that's one we've also talked about in relation to how it affects community.

Heather: Yeah, I mean, I think, as I said earlier, I'm a huge fan of social media, I'm on social media a lot. But it's easy to curate there in a way that unfortunately doesn't always serve us well. And if you're only cultivating relationships, at least in my own experience, when I was only primarily cultivating relationships online, then when things got really hard, when my husband and I argued, I mean I didn't go post that. But what you do you need is a sounding board, somebody to talk through things and that can help you shift a perspective, or grow, or all kinds of things.

And the thing is, I don't think I realized how lonely I was truly, or how alone I was, or how vulnerable I was in a particularly hard situation, not having the support that I needed until I started really experiencing community. And I thought, "Oh, gosh, this is like a complete...this is a totally different experience." Because when hard things happen, and they do to all of us, there's a support, there's something around you that helps you hold yourself together. Those people don't hold you together, but they believe in you, they remind you to hope, and they stay with you through it, and it makes all the difference.

And I don't think we can ever have a conversation about community and vulnerability without bringing up Brené Brown. And one of the biggest takeaways I had in terms of really just looking back and finding how I made it from a person who didn't really experience true community to someone who is really surrounded by people who are my people, is that I'm surprised at who those people turned out to be. They're not all the people with whom I agree on everything or share exactly the same values, or the same sense of humor, or really like anything in some cases.

So Brené Brown has a story that she tells about her daughter that really, I think, describes, like, how we can identify those people in our lives that are the beginnings of community. So, if you're thinking to yourself, like, "That sounds really good, but I have no idea who that person would be in my life." I love this story from her. She basically said that her daughter walks through the front door from school one day, closes the door, and slides against the door, just kinda crumbles on the floor. And Brené is like, "What's going on?" Basically, something humiliating had happened to her, I believe, at school, and she had told a couple of close friends about it, they promised not to tell. And then, you know, by the next period or shortly after that, everyone in the class knew. And the humiliation level was high, and she felt so betrayed.

And the teacher, I guess, has some marbles in a jar that sort of collectively reflects the attitude of class, or like, you know, what they... It's sort of a barometer of the direction of the class. And she took half the marbles out of the jar, like she was really upset about the level of humiliation this little girl was experiencing. And so, the little girl tells Brené, she said, "I'm just never gonna trust anyone again, like never ever doing that." And I think we've all had that moment where we get burned, I mean it's an inevitable part of being vulnerable.

And you know, as a mom, you're like, "Yeah!" until you realize like, "But that's a really lonely life." So very wisely Brené says, you know, "That marble jar... You know, do you have any friends who have..." I'm trying to remember the concept of the marble jar, but it's really about not behavior and sort of a reward sense, but like a reflection of the investments. You know, "Do you have anyone who has invested in your life who has filled that marble jar for you?" And she said, "Yeah, like, my friend that remembers..." you know, I can't remember what the grandparents name, "Mimi and papa's name." She's like "Well, what else?" And she's like, "Oh that's it, it's just that I have eight grandparents, and, you know, for someone to take the time to remember all my grandparents' names really means a lot to me."

And then she said, "Well, do you have any other, you know, marble jar friends, people who have really invested in you, who have shown up for you?" She's like, "Oh yeah," I think she calls it her half butt friend. But she's like, "What's a half butt friend?" And she's like "Well, you know, when I show up to lunch and the table is already full, she shares half her seat with me, and we put half of our cheeks on the seat so that I don't have to sit, you know, somewhere else or sit alone." And I'm like, "Yeah, to me that sounds like a marble jar friend."

But we all have people in our lives who show up for us even when we don't necessarily agree or share every same perspective. And, you know, you and I have a community of friends that sort of was randomly selected at the beginning. We didn't actually know what we had in common or what we shared, but we just kind of started showing up on a regular basis and holding ourselves to that standard. And we found the things that form connection, but it was kind of like a... We didn't know it was there till we tried it out, and it just grew. So, in choosing community, I think it's important just to see who's already around you and sort of like cultivate that.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's something, like to the point you just mentioned, it's something so important also to model for our kids and for the next generation. Because if loneliness is this epidemic that's facing us right now with what we currently have with technology and social media, that's not going to lessen for our kids. They're gonna have to really have skills to work through this and to develop actual relationships. And that was the other thing we really wanted to make sure we could figure out how to talk about today, was how can we foster, all of us in our own lives, how can we build community hopefully without having to go through something horrible?

We certainly hope none of you guys ever have to go through a hurricane or through any disaster, but how can we take the lessons of that and bring them into our daily life to build community? Because, as you mentioned, that loneliness is so statistically important, and we feel that too. But on the flip side, having...let's see, I think I found one statistic that having strong community and social connection leads to a 50% increased chance of longevity. It strengthens the immune system, it helps us recover from disease.

People who have strong connections have lower rates of anxiety and depression. They're more empathetic, they're more trusting, they're more generous, pretty much all things that we want to have in our lives. And if there was a supplement or an exercise program that did that, we would all be jumping in to do it. So just realizing how important, like truly I can't emphasize enough, if there's one thing that you're going to do for your health, start with people, and start with relationships and community. It's more important than what you eat, it's more important than your exercise, it's more important than your sleep, which is huge, because you guys know how much we value sleep and how we keep driving that point into the ground of how important sleep is.

And so, to that point, I know we wanted to kind of walk through our own way that we found community and try to pull some points that can work across the board. Like diet, of course, there's personalized aspects, and every community will look different. But I think there are universal things that can help build those

relationships and those social connections. And, to your point, I think vulnerability is where it starts. And I love Brené Brown, I know you love Brené Brown too, and we'll link her books in the show notes. Definitely can't recommend them enough, I know she has a new one out that I haven't read yet, but it's on my Kindle. But I think that that takes a conscious effort, and we have to be willing to let our guard down and to be vulnerable. And that opens us up to the potential to be hurt, because truly when you're vulnerable, that's when you can most be hurt, but that's also when you can most be loved.

And so, you have to be willing to let that guard down, and to do that hopefully in a way with people who you can trust and who are going to build you up in that time of vulnerability. And I think part of that too is a conscious effort to choose to see the best in other people and in yourself. And that, at least speaking from my own perspective, choosing to see the best in myself is the hardest sometimes. It's easy to find the best in others so often, and I hold myself to such a tougher standard, and I'm so much harder on myself. I know that's probably a pretty common theme among women.

But one book that really helped me with this recently, I mentioned it in passing on another episode, it's called "The Four Agreements." And it's a really short easy read, and it's basically about subtle shifts to these four agreements you make with yourself that over time change your thought process and how you interact with people. And the four agreements are basically, first, to be impeccable with your word. And that means in speaking to other people, but also in your self-talk and also in your actions. Just being impeccable, so on the basic level with what you say you're gonna do, you do it, what you say you're not gonna do, you don't.

But also, being truthful when you speak to yourself and not being harsh on yourself, or derogatory toward yourself or toward others. Because certainly, when we speak negatively about others, it brings us down too. The second part of it being, don't take anything personally, and I think that alone is partially the antidote to the social media world. Because I see so often and I'm certainly guilty of having done this in the past as well, falling into that trap of needing to be right, and to argue a point, and getting so upset when someone has a differing viewpoint. Because we see it as...it brings up fear in us, I think, and insecurity. And if we really face it, it makes us question our viewpoint, which is a great thing if we're brave enough to do it.

But to not take anything personally and realize that so often what other people do and say is coming from a place that...somewhere that they need to work on or that they're going through. And so many times that's a place of fear, or pain, or insecurity. And rather than responding in anger, if we can respond in empathy and compassion, we can help them work through that, and actually bring both of us to a better level and to a stronger relationship versus having the need to prove that we're right, even if we actually think we are right. We typically don't gain much by proving that.

The third point being not making excuses, and I think that's also a really hard one because it's hard to admit, especially if we haven't done something perfectly that we didn't do it perfectly and not make an excuse for why or try to justify that. That's when I know I even catch myself on a lot. And then finally, always do your best. And I think that's a good example of the only standard we can truly hold our self to. Because that's one downfall I see that you have to be careful of when you really start engaging in community, is there is a temptation to compare yourself to other people or to judge yourself with them as a barometer.

And at the end of the day, all we can really judge our self against is our own actions the day before and getting better in our own life day by day. And so those just four simple rules have been easy, like a good metric for me to start measuring by, and I think they can be helpful in trying to work through those relationships and to build them.

Heather: Absolutely. And on that note, I think you and I were talking about this earlier. Sometimes you just...especially when it comes down to being right, that's definitely something that I struggle with as well, ask my husband. But my husband and I were...our kids were going completely bonkers a few days ago, and obviously, they've been very, very cooped up because of all that's been going on. And they were just kind of...they were all bouncing off the walls and it was really, really hard. And I said I think we need to get them out of the house and let them run. And his response was kind of like, definitely like more of a... like a normal life response, was like, "I don't know that we should reward this. Like they're acting crazy, should we really take them out? Like I don't want them to start thinking that this is the way to get what they want."

And I said, "I feel like at this exact moment, we just need to assume that we're all doing the best we can and choose the perspective that, let's see, assumes the best in us, and just sort of act with that." So, we ended up getting them out of the house, letting them run, and it was so good for our family. But it's so easy, like, in almost any situation, multiple perspectives are valid or can be valid. And sometimes it comes down to just choosing the one that honors the connection and just assumes the best. And it can be really hard to do if it's something you really care about.

Like, I really care about silence sometimes when life has been really challenging and stuff, like, my nerves were a little frayed at the moment, and it was hard. But understanding that everyone is doing the best they can definitely served us all well. We got them out, they ran, it was good. So that's just, on the subject of being right or choosing what's most conducive to relationship. Let's see here, do you wanna talk about everything will work out perfectly?

Katie: Yeah, actually this is a shout out to my new friend Tina, from...she's one of the people that founded Just Thrive Probiotics, which is the probiotic that I've been using. And when I've gotten to spend time with her in real life, she has this motto that she always turns to, which is that everything will work out perfectly. And that may not mean that everything will work out the easiest way or the way we want it to, but just it's a reminder that everything will work out. And it's her motto that she says especially in tough times.

And the irony is, at least from the outside, her life does seem to always work out. And it's one of those chicken or egg type things, does her life work out because she's always positive, and she's looking for the good. Or, you know, like is that something she's consciously doing, or is it just she's keeping the positive focus, so everything seems good? But it's been something that's been helpful for me in the last few weeks since I spent time with her, is just keeping that focus even in the midst of all the craziness right now of just like everything will work out perfectly. And in 10 years, this stuff is not gonna matter, and people will rebuild, and we'll be here to help them hopefully during that whole process.

But just I think that the point there is keeping the positive in mind because I think what we look for we will find often. And if we're always looking for the negative, we'll certainly find it in today's world. But if we're looking for the positive and were assuming the best to go back to the earlier point, I think then that happens as well. And at the very least, we are happier people, if that's our focus, even if not everything in life goes our way or is easy, it's just easier to find the good in whatever happens when you keep that focus.

Heather: Yes, so one thing I wanted to kind of mention was just some things that we've done over time that has actually strengthened the bonds, and the trust between our friendship circle. So, like I said, we sort of just picked not random, but like, people who just kind of said, "You're my people," and then we sort of went from there and built it out. And one of the things that I've noticed looking back is there are a lot of ways to do this. Some families I know, like, have four or five families, they do Friday night dinners, and they really...like the tables all decked out, they really make it special. And they get together like every Friday night, they're doing life together. And other people, you know, like, they camp together.

Some of the things that we've done are, well, we started with meals like once a month, and we had to drive and plan, and, you know, it was a lot to make it work, but we did. And then we actually planned a few trips with other families and they were close within driving distance, and kind of budget-friendly you know. But we got together and literally spent time. And I remember during one of those trips we got a... I'll have to get the list. But there was that list of...they're supposed to be icebreaker questions, but we've been friends for years at this point. And yet, when you really get to that place where you're answering these questions in, like, a true and honest and vulnerable way, like, the people in your life, you can really learn to appreciate and see them in a new light. And it is really amazing to get to do that, we should post those icebreaker questions because they're really fun.

And then, one of our favorite things is to do hard things together. One of the hilarious things that you and I have always done is if we walk by something, or an opportunity comes up to what stand...what is the cryotank, like, negative 220? So, you're like "Let's go stand in a cryotank that's like negative 220 degrees," and I'm like "that sounds terrible... absolutely!" Because when you go through those things when even you, you choose to do hard things together, then it brings you together because there's just a level of connection. And so, you know, we hope that like Katie said earlier that, you know, that we don't experience the kinds of tragedy that so many of our neighbors have recently. But also, we choose to be challenged and we choose to challenge ourselves.

Like I think you and I, both of our kids wanna do 5Ks recently. They're like, "Hey, mom, can we do a 5K?" And I was literally like, "I don't know, can I do a 5K?" I mean, "I do, I stay fit and stuff, but, like, can I really run a 5K? I don't know." So, you and I are both like "Well we can't let our kids, like, outshine us," so we're both doing a 5k now. But you know, it's like no planning we're just gonna do it. And letting challenge be one of the defining aspects of our relationship has been like what kind of pulls us together, because we have to work together to, like, accomplish goals.

Can you think of anything else our friends...like we do meals together with our extended community. I know we just did one recently in a yard like a big neighborhood meal, and that was really fun. But what are some other things that we've done that in a practical term have brought us closer to the people, and the neighbors, and just the people in our lives?

Katie: Yeah, I think you hit the nail on the head with just prioritizing time. I know I often say that at the end of podcast interviews, I thank people for sharing their most valuable asset, which is their time with us. And that's so true in real life as well. And to emphasize your point, because I think it can be hard to find your people, and that was something that I really struggled with for years. And I feel like I'm a person who can get along with anybody, but I have trouble opening up and trusting and being vulnerable, because of past experiences, like Brené Brown's daughter.

And so that has been the struggle for me, and when we started our group, I know we've mentioned it before, but we literally have a group of families that pretty much in the beginning the only commonality was that we all were in this online world together. And we sort of picked each other out of obscurity and were like, "Hey, we're gonna meet up at a house, and we're gonna bring all our kids, and we're gonna just have community and mastermind and we're gonna help each other." And the irony there is it was actually a reaction to another event that I had been to before that, where I had a nursing baby who was super tiny and quiet, and they basically told me I wasn't welcome there because she was with me, and she wasn't disturbing or anything.

And so that was part of our thing in the beginning, was we're gonna create a very small event where families are welcome, and not just welcome, but they're celebrated, and they're nurtured. Because, I feel like we're all torn whatever we do in our lives as our jobs, or our careers, and then our families, were always so torn

between those. And especially, as a woman, I can say it's hard when I'm working, I feel guilty that I'm not with my kids, but I also feel this drive to the work that I do, because I care so deeply about it. And when I'm with my kids, I'm grateful for that, but then I'm also thinking of all the things I need to do for work.

And so, we were like, we're gonna create an event where we can have both, and we can celebrate both, and we can have family time. And the beautiful thing that's grown out of that is our kids now have these amazing friendships as well, and we have these amazing friendships. But truly, in the beginning, we really didn't know each other and like you said, we don't share the same religion, or the same political views, or any of that.

And when we first started none of us lived in the same state, and a couple of them didn't even live in the same country. And we would make a point to get together twice a year, and I think that's something that's important to keep in mind is that sometimes you do have to make the effort. The community in today's world, unfortunately, doesn't happen as spontaneously as it once did. But I think that is something we really desperately need to nurture.

And I think other cultures do a better job of this, like so back to Tina who runs the probiotic, she's Serbian, and she talked about how in their community they basically form lifelong relationships with another family, or group. So, when they get married, the best man in the wedding is called the Koom, and then he becomes the godfather of all the children, and he's involved in their life the whole time. So, you always have that person that you know has your back. And I think for so many of us there's not a given...it's not built in like that, and so we have to make the choice to build it in. But I think that's the core point that I keep going back to is we have to just prioritize that it's not just necessarily going to happen, and it takes sometimes going, "Hey, you're my people. Let's get together."

Heather: Yeah, and for us, it was definitely a process, like you said, we didn't actually live near each other when we really decided that we were each other's people. But over time, literally over years now, several of the families have gravitated to a more of a local area so that getting together is easier and easier. And then we're making the effort with those who are still living further away. And maybe that doesn't make sense for everyone, but for us, because of the passions that we shared we had such a strong common bond in one area that we just decided to make it work.

But yeah, it was kind of an evolution where we started distant and then physical location, physical closeness, and being in daily life sharing meals, not wheels, sharing meals on a more regular basis has become like more of a non-negotiable. Because it's the daily or weekly community that seems to have the most impact on our overall well-being. Do you wanna transition into the top podcast that you've done over these last...is it 100 episodes, and some of your favorite takeaways from there? Or did you wanna add anything on the community aspect?

Katie: Yeah, I think let's transition into that. The last thing I would say on community is just be willing to be challenged. I think that's something that our little community has done super well, is that because we didn't always agree on everything, but because we love these people so much, we had to let ourselves be challenged, and accept the possibility that maybe we're not right about everything. And I think we grow as people from doing that. On a personal level, I've kind of spent the last two years...basically, I made a list of everything I thought I believed and have challenged myself point by point on all of those. Because I think it's one of those situations where if you're right, then you're only going to strengthen your viewpoint and hopefully, gain empathy for the people who may choose a different viewpoint. And if you're wrong, if there's a hill you're willing to die on you wanna make sure it's a hill worth dying.

And so, I think a community doesn't have to be so like homogeneous that it just reinforces our beliefs either. I think sometimes choosing our people means choosing people that challenge us because that's how we grow. So, I just wanted to leave that out there as well. If you can't find your group of people exactly like you wherever you live, find people who aren't, but who are kind, or generous, or have that in common and build from there.

This podcast is brought to you by Four Sigmatic. There's so much I love about this company, for instance their founder, Tero, for him foraging and growing local foods is a passion that goes back generations as he is a 13th-generation farmer from Finland, where they do things a little bit differently. Tero found a way to incorporate highly beneficial superfood mushrooms into everyday beverages like coffee, matcha and superfood elixirs so we can all sip them every day and get the many benefits. For instance, did you know that one serving of Chaga mushrooms contains as much antioxidants as 30 pounds of carrots, and that Chaga mushrooms are considered the most antioxidant rich food on earth gram for gram? Four Sigmatic coffee has been my go-to on coffee days for years since it has beneficial Lions Mane or Cordyceps for an extra brain boost without the jitters, and I consume one of their coffees or elixirs every day. I also often end the day with their Reishi Elixir which helps promote restful sleep. You can check out their full range of products and grab a 15% discount by going to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and using the code wellnessmama.

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Katie: Yeah, let's go on to the top five recap, and then reminding myself to come back to the gratitude exercise at the very end and...

Heather: I was gonna actually mention that because I remember you said that over coffee this morning and I was like we should definitely, definitely talk about that. All right, so let's talk about some of the most popular podcasts that have occurred in the last 100 episodes, and your biggest take away from them. So, number one, Jim Kwik. Tell us about that?

Katie: Yeah, this one, I know so many of you guys loved and I loved it too. Jim was...I felt like every word out of his mouth was quotable. Typically, I try to think of a couple quotes while I'm recording and write them down so that we can make them into quotes. And for him, I had like three pages of quotes that will continue to show up on social media for the next year, because it was so, so good. But he said things like, "If knowledge is power then learning is a superpower." And that for our kids facing this world to come, or even for us now, we have to be able to be adaptable to think critically and to learn quickly. And so that's been his life work.

The beauty of Jim is that he proves it's possible because when he was young, he had learning disabilities, and it took him a long time to read, and he wasn't considered smart in school. And he shares his own story of how basically, like, reading through comic books, and like seeing these figures that could go from more shy or sheltered, like how Superman...he was Clark Kent in real life. Or seeing these people who in real life weren't superheroes, but that stepped up and became superheroes that that was part of him learning how to have his

own superpower, which now is being an expert in rapid learning, and memory, and teaching people these skills. He even teaches actors and actresses how to memorize their lines more quickly for parts.

But Jim shares my passion for the next generation and for kids. And that was the beauty of that podcast, is he really went deep on how can we set our kids up for success in the future, and also how can we make sure that we keep our minds sharp, and we keep, most importantly, advancing the good of community, and the good of all of us by learning and dialoguing and working toward common goals. And I really love that episode for all those reasons.

Heather: That reminds me of a Marie Forleo quote that I came across recently, that it wasn't the official tagline of my childhood, but when I kinda heard it, I was like, "But it was, it just wasn't stated," and that was "Everything is figureoutable." You know, that was the mindset that my mom had when she raised my sister and I. My dad passed away, he didn't... So when I'm in my teens, she was my primary influence. And it literally didn't matter what it was, her response was, "Everything's figureoutable. We can always work around or learn the skills that we need to make this work." And it definitely is what I took into adulthood and I'm so grateful for that lesson. So that is really awesome.

Katie: Yeah, and to that note, it reminds me of another great thing we've taken from our own little community. Some friends of ours say it over and over and like it's become I think all of our family motto's is, "We were made to do hard things." And those little things, they become kind of rallying cries in your own life, in your own community. And that's just one of those beautiful things that we've learned from someone in our community.

Heather: Absolutely, that is definitely a family motto for us. Number two, episode 90, Dr. Kelly Brogan. So, what was your big takeaway there?

Katie: So, this is a great one to go back and listen to if you have any kind of hormone issues or especially anxiety and depression. What I love about her is she is so incredibly well researched and thorough in everything that she does. And she's not afraid to the earlier point, to question everything. So, she breaks down the studies and looks at why, and what's the motivation, and how does this actually come into play in real human models. And she tries to take a very holistic approach. So, she has...as an MD, she for years prescribed different types of medication, and then researched her way out of that basically.

So as a doctor, she will not prescribe, for instance, birth control to her patients, because she now understands the hormonal cascade that happens. And she sees that link between anxiety and depression later on. So, I just feel like her approach was very tangible and practical. And I hear from so many people and I know you do as well with anxiety and depression. And we know that mental health things are on the rise, and I feel like this is something that we owe it to all of us to keep addressing and pushing forward, and learning about, and challenging, because right now, I feel like so many of the common... just the common prescriptions for people in those situations are not effective and there are people who are truly suffering. And so, I loved that her approach was very practical and very action-oriented, and that also very much full of empathy and compassion. She understands what people are going through, she's had her own struggles, and so she comes from a place of truly trying to help people work through that.

Heather: I love that, because I think it's one thing to say this is right or this is wrong, but to really say I know that there's real suffering there. Let's look at how we can really alleviate that from a holistic perspective as a way of approaching this, is what we were really need. Man, I think I just took one sip of coffee too much. Let's go on to episode 169, Eric Remensperger.

Katie: So, I met Eric at "Paleo f/x" last year, and I started talking to him, and we literally talked and geeked out for three hours on studies. And that's when I knew I had to have him on the podcast. But Eric is really cool because he's actually a lawyer, I think he's probably the first lawyer I've ever interviewed on the podcast. And he also had advanced staged really serious prostate. Yes, prostate cancer, I always try to say pancreas, but that's not right. He had prostate cancer and took his...so he's in the legal side, the reason he's such a great lawyer is because he's a great researcher and he can connect the dots.

So, he basically took that same approach to his health and researched how to get better. And the interesting thing with him is he was already doing pretty much all the things that conventionally would make you healthy. Like, he ticked all the boxes, he got plenty of exercise, he got sleep, he ate a clean diet, he wasn't eating sugar, he was not eating inflammatory foods. His morning smoothie was apparently even more dense than Ben Greenfield's, there was like 40 ingredients in it, and he still got cancer. And so, this really led him to research why do we get cancer, and how can we undo it. And he basically took the approach that a lot of experts have put forth that cancer is basically a metabolic disease, that there is... like on a cellular level there's things going on that you have to address so that the body can recover, and if you do that the body will bounce back.

So he used a mixture of hyperbaric therapy, vitamin C in high doses, ozone therapy in IV an, fasting, and there were several other things he did. And he completely reversed his advanced stage cancer. And we know statistically that cancers are pretty much on the rise across the board, so there was a lot to learn from his experience.

Heather: One interesting note, I actually had the opportunity to eat dinner with him and a whole group of other people recently. And so just something that ties into our podcast today is that community is actually one of the things that he's doing amazingly well at. I think women, we are aware now that community is important, but I think even men aren't actually often much more of a difficult situation. Vulnerability is considered so inappropriate, I guess, I don't know what the right word is, it's so taboo for so many groups of men.

But what he has done is he has a group of men, and they range in ages, like there are some young guys, there are some older guys, they're kind of at all stages in life. But they show up, is it like once a month, and they really do like getting vulnerable. And they have some specific criteria that they're sticking to in order to really be good friends to each other. And I thought that was amazing because, you know, you talk about all the things that he's doing, but that's something that he feels is worth investing his time in.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's a great point, and I'm so glad you remembered that. Because he said that too in the podcast that he thinks that is actually one of the bigger keys of why he got better. And he, like us, he had to be really intentional about that and just pick some people, and be like, "Hey you're my people, let's get together once a month." And from what I've heard, obviously I haven't been to it, it's a guy's group, but they talk about vulnerable things, and they let each other be vulnerable. So, I think he's a perfect example of that.

Heather: All right, let's go on to episode 163, Tero from Four Sigmatic. Man, I remember when you first shared this copy with me and I was like, "Wait," because I had a little one at the moment. And I was...not super little, but toddler, and I was like, "You can just carry coffee in your purse and mix it with water, like, for emergencies, or meltdowns, or whatever, best thing ever." But it's more than that, so I would love to hear what your biggest takeaway was from that interview.

Katie: For sure, I've actually passed out so much Four Sigmatic this last week because it's all in these pouches and it's instant, and you can mix it actually with hot or cold water. And so people who are...they don't have

electricity or running water, there's so many beneficial properties to these mushrooms, which is one of the things that Tero talked about in this episode. But I've been passing out the Chaga and the cordyceps, and these mushrooms that have antioxidant properties, and anti-bacterial, and anti-viral, just for these people who are going through a lot of stress and have compromised immune systems right now.

And also, of course, the coffee ones that are instant, that can be mixed with water when you can't make coffee in the morning. Just that alone, I think helps people so much just when you have nothing and then you get a cup of coffee in the morning, that's like one thing that used to be a constant in your life. It's been amazing to see like just that little pick me up can make such a big difference for people in their daily lives. But I've been a fan of using medicinal mushrooms or basically culinary mushrooms in a medicinal way for a long time. And the more I've learned the more I feel like that... So, Tero really went deep on all the main mushrooms that you can use for different benefits and how they work.

And so, everything from Chaga, which is the most gram for gram antioxidant-rich substance on the planet. So by weight and volume, it's if you...I think it's one serving of Chaga has as much antioxidant as 30 pounds of carrots, or like several pounds of blueberries. It's drastically high in antioxidants, it's also delicious. He talks about Lion's Mane and how that actually they're finding it can promote neurogenesis in the brain. So, the development of new neural pathways and improvements in the brain. And there's actually clinical studies happening on that right now for people with brain injuries, or Alzheimer's, or even just those trying to keep a sharp mind as they age.

And other mushrooms like Reishi which has gotten a lot of publicity lately for its ability to influence the parasympathetic nervous system, and to promote restful sleep. And so, he just really explains all of those really well. And I will say, I just recorded another one with him, so keep an ear out toward Christmas. A fascinating episode about how a lot of the traditions we associate with Santa Claus actually go back to his home country of Finland, and especially the northern region called Lapland and where those come from. So, it answers questions like why Santa wears red, or has a pointy hat, or comes down a chimney, so keep an ear out for that one.

Heather: Yeah, he told me a little bit about that recently, it was very interesting. All right, we have one more, and this one is something that's been on both of our radar and our hearts for years now. And that's episode 161 on sex trafficking. What was your biggest takeaway from that podcast?

Katie: Yeah, this was a tough one but also a beautiful one. It was very illuminating as far as the statistics and realizing that we often think we're so safe especially in the U.S. and we're facing this at a really drastic level. I was interviewing people from an organization called Operation Underground Railroad, and their website is our rescue O-U-Rescue I believe. You can Google it, but they talked about why we have such a problem and where it's stemming from. But they also gave ways that we can all work to keep our kids and our communities safe, so even if we don't have kids, how we can keep our community safe.

And they have a free course, it's basically a training on how to look out for the signs of sex trafficking, and what we can all do about it. Because this is such a big problem that many of us don't even realize. And one thing I loved about this episode is...because you and I, of course, have talked about overprotected childhood and how it's so important that kids get to play outside. And so often, we hear from people who don't want their kids to play outside or roam outside, because they worry about them being kidnapped, or, you know, being abducted. And that's a very real concern, obviously, that was actually something that was that was happening we would want to make sure that didn't happen.

But one thing they really hammered home in that episode was that just based on the statistics, the odds of your kid getting kidnapped in your front yard are so low that essentially a child would need to stand there for 750,000 years to get kidnapped in their front yard. Whereas the odds are much, much greater on social media. And so that really stuck out to me because I feel like so often, we are keeping kids inside to keep them safe, and as a result, they're on screens, and on phones, and on tablets, and on social media more. And that was a commonality they found from, like, so many of the victims that they're rescuing, is that they had been targeted on social media.

And so, it's a good reminder as a parent to make sure that we're being vigilant and teaching our kids good skills, making sure there's open communication, and really monitoring how they're interacting online because they said that's where the real danger is. It's not in our yards or neighborhoods in most cases, of course, there are exceptions, but most of the time, it's in the online world that we really need to be careful.

Heather: Certainly interesting. So here I am, I'm gonna circle back to something that we talked about over coffee today. And I feel like it is the perfect way to wrap up today's Saunacast because we're both like...we're melting here, but I just think it really ties together everything. I mean I'm so grateful today for the last 200 episodes, everything, all the wisdom that's been shared, and all the amazing takeaways that so many people have shared with us. And also, just in our own lives for community and everything. But you mentioned something today that I think you should maybe walk us through again as we wrap up.

Katie: Yeah, this was something that came up in a very real way when we were all in that hotel a few hours away waiting to see if it was gonna actually be our reality. But it was just a gratitude exercise to remind us just how fortunate we all are. Because truly, if you're listening to this, you have so much more than most people in the world, but it's easy to forget that because of the busyness of life and all that goes on. And so, the exercise basically is to close your eyes for a second and imagine that you truly have nothing, and not like you don't have all the possessions that you wish you had. But like, you have no clothes, there is no light, you are cold, you have no food, you are hungry, there's no bathroom, there's no running water, there's no bed, you truly have nothing, and just to sit with that for a second of what that feels like.

Because there are people here near us that are pretty close to that, thankfully, most of them have clothes and we're trying really hard to bring them food. But a lot of them don't have shelter, and they don't have running water, and they don't have electricity. So just sit with that and feel what that would feel like. So many of us have never gratefully had to actually feel that, but a lot of people do. And so, to feel that feeling for a minute and then to imagine that someone gave you a shelter even if it was a tent or a roof over your head. And someone gave you clothes just to have something on your body and how grateful that would feel if you only had those things.

And then imagine that someone restored power to that shelter that you had, and there was running water, and even plumbing, which so many people in the world still don't have. And how much easier your life would get just from those things, even if you had nothing else. And then imagine one by one all the comforts that we have in real life, the warm beds that we sleep in, and more than just one clothing option, and access to food, and access to clean water, and even access to entertainment, and getting to watch movies and see friends, and to play games, and have possessions that are just purely there for enjoyment.

And just a reminder of all those things in life that we can be grateful for, because, to some degree, I feel like that's a lesson we both got a little bit of in the last week that I'm so grateful for, is having to mentally go to a place where you realize all those things could be gone. And then get to actually come home to them. It's like getting them back as a gift. And so, I think that circles back to the original point about community, and others

as just having that gratitude for all the so many wonderful things we have in life, and being willing to share them, without there having to be a disaster to make that happen.

And I think there's a fitting quote, I don't know if you wanna read it or do you want me to read it? But from Brené Brown who we've talked about so many times today, just on the importance of community, and I think it's a perfect fitting into this podcast.

Heather: Yeah, she writes, "A deep sense of love and belonging is an irresistible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don't function as we were meant to. We break, we fall apart, we numb, we ache, we hurt others, we get sick."

Katie: So, I think that's a perfect place to wrap up. And, like I often say, thank you guys so much for listening and for sharing your time in these last 200 episodes with us. If any of you guys want more detail on the hurricane relief efforts and what we're doing on the ground here, check out the show notes at wellnessmama.fm. I will link to a way that you can get supplies and help directly to those of us who are trying to help these individual people in need. But definitely, please keep us all in your thoughts and prayers, as so many people down here rebuild. And we hope that you will consider in whatever way possible in your life, finding ways to build and nurture community in little ways every day. And thank you for listening.

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