



Episode 211: How to Boost Your Adrenals and Cleanse Using Food With Dr. Alejandro Junger

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is brought to you by Organifi and I'm so excited to finally tell you about them! Because, here's a confession... I have known about Organifi for a really long time and even though so many of my friends and experts I trust rave about them, I never tried their stuff until recently because I thought... first of all, how can it actually be that good? Well, I tried it and it turns out that it is not only that good, it's better than I expected! Organifi has green juice, red juice (which is an antioxidant red drink and it's delicious) and a golden milk turmeric drink, along with a plant-based protein. Everything they have is completely organic and they all actually taste good, unlike a lot of other green drinks and protein powders. I've especially been loving their red juice lately... especially at this time of year for immunity. It tastes amazing and it has a blend of antioxidants from strawberries, cranberries, blueberries, pomegranates and they also add in beets, cordyceps, reishi, rhodiola and a lot more. So, this particular blend is formulated to increase energy, boost metabolism and reduce factors that lead to aging. Their green juice is minty and delicious, and I noticed it has almost 800 5-star reviews. You can check out those two products, along with their whole suite of products and save 20% just by being a listener of the Wellness Mama podcast. Go to <http://organifi.com/wellnessmama> and use the code: WELLNESS20 for 20% off.

This podcast is also brought to you by Good Culture. Good Culture makes amazing cottage cheese. I know, I know, not necessarily two words you would put in the same sentence on everyday speaking. But theirs is awesome, I promise, even if you don't love cottage cheese. Basically, it's naturally fermented cottage cheese so it's free of gums, fillers, and additives and it's packed with probiotics. And because it's made naturally it doesn't have that weird mouth feel that a lot of cottage cheese has. So, I use it all the time in cooking and smoothies as a substitute for other types of cheese, or just a meal on the go. You can find it at Whole Foods and many other grocery stores and it comes in yogurt-sized cups too, and those are perfect for meals. Check them out. It's Good Culture and they are available at many grocery stores.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and I'm here today with a living legend, Alejandro Junger is the New York Times bestselling author of multiple books, including "Clean," "Clean Gut," and "Clean Eats." And after training in internal medicine in New York and completing a fellowship in cardiology at Lenox Hill Hospital, he also studied Eastern medicine in India. And he now brings the wisdom of Western medicine and Eastern medicine together in his unique approach that has been touted by celebrities and other doctors that I highly respect. And I'm so excited to jump in. Dr. Junger, welcome and thank you so much for being here.

Dr. Junger: Thank you for having me.

Katie: Well, so in researching for this podcast I came across the fact that you are from Uruguay, if I researched that correctly, which is one of my favorite countries. I haven't been there but it's a country I've read quite a bit about. So if you don't mind I'd love to start there because I truly believe that we can learn from every culture and every place so much. So I'm curious if your time in Uruguay has had an impact on the way that you

practice medicine or on your adult life, or if there are things from the way of life in Uruguay that you think we can learn in America?

Dr. Junger: Well, I don't know that we can learn about the way of life in Uruguay now a lot because we've imported a lot of the bad things that happened in America like fast foods and processed foods. But at the time when I was growing up there, there were no supermarkets and there were no processed packaged foods. I used to go to the farmers market with my father and he used to teach me how to choose fruits and vegetables, and we knew that people that were growing them. There were no chemicals used.

So that's really how I grew up. And then after medical school, I moved to New York and, you know, I was fascinated with supermarkets and all the packaged foods that you can put in a microwave oven and have a dinner ready in two minutes that took my mother eight hours to prepare in Uruguay. And basically I started getting sick. I didn't know it was from the lifestyle, right? But after I embarked on my journey of healing myself more naturally than what medicine had offered me at that time, I learned that, you know, the way that I used to live when I lived with my parents in Uruguay was what I should be doing back again.

Katie: I think you're right. There's so much wisdom in that about and going back to the simpler approach and just to basic real foods versus foods that have so many ingredients. And I know that now you're a well-respected expert in many things but one of them is adrenal health and adrenal fatigue, which is something I get so many questions about. So I'm hoping that you can really shed some light for us. But to start, for anyone who isn't familiar, can you just give us an overview of what the adrenals are and why they're so important to the body?

Dr. Junger: Yeah. Adrenals are little glands that live on top of the kidneys. They're small and they're lodge on top of the kidneys. And what they do is they produce certain hormones like adrenaline and noradrenaline, and they are involved in everything that has to do with the production, the maintenance of energy levels, and also at times when you need burst of energy like adrenaline does for you for different situations, like the typical fight or flight reaction, right? So that is what the adrenals are and what they are most known for.

Katie: Got it. Okay. And then there's this term floating around that I hear a lot, and I'm sure many people listening have heard, which is adrenal fatigue. So what happens when in adrenal fatigue and what's happening in the body at that point?

Dr. Junger: So when I went to medical school, we only learned of adrenal failure. You know, when the adrenal glands stop working altogether and that's called Addison's disease. And that's an extreme form of adrenal, not fatigue, but basically, when it stops functioning altogether. But we never really looked at less intense ways of under functioning of the adrenal glands. That actually I learned more from Eastern approaches and from functional medicine. And that was after medical school and after all my training. There are still most traditional trained doctors still don't even compute adrenal fatigue as a real problem. But when you start understanding what it is, you start seeing that it's a world epidemic. And most people living modern busy lives are adrenally fatigued to some extreme, to some degree.

Katie: You're so right, though. I've seen so many medical sources that pretty much deny the existence of adrenal fatigue altogether and say that it's only really problematic when it does get into those advanced stages. But what do you think are some of the factors that are contributing to this adrenal fatigue that seems to be on the rise so much?

Dr. Junger: Well, you know, the main factor of adrenal fatigue, as it is the same with most modern medical problems or most chronic problems in general, is that we human beings are not living in the way that nature designed us to live. You know, when you see animals living according to the ways of nature, to nature's design, you don't see problems like we humans suffer from. There are no lions in the wild with depression or giraffes with autoimmune diseases or monkeys with obesity or, you know, rhinos with diabetes.

So what happens is nature designed our bodies, our cells, our organs, and all its functions, but the design is not isolated. It's actually inserted in a bigger design of your environment and the world and the planet, right? And if you start looking at it in that way you see that human beings, we are living in a completely different way than what nature designed, and that's why we get sick. We don't sleep at the times that, you know, is the best for our design. We don't eat at the times or the foods or the quantities and the foods themselves, right? If you look at that alone, according to the way that nature designed things, we should be eating only local stuff that is in season because nature didn't invent imports of blueberries from Argentina or coconuts from Tahiti or whatever it is that we do these days.

You go to the supermarket these days and you have all kinds of fruits and vegetables from all kinds of seasons that come from all different countries. So, also the levels of stress and, you know, these pressures that we put on ourselves and our sleep patterns, as I mentioned before, all these things contribute to us basically getting exhausted. And you don't even need the term adrenal fatigue to know that exhaustion is one of the problems of humanity today. At least humanity that lives in a modern way and, you know, adrenal fatigue is at the physiologic basis of why we end up all exhausted. And it affects many things. It affects your hair. It affects your hormones. It affects your skin, it affects every organ because everything is interconnected, you know?

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I think you're right. We're fighting an uphill battle in today's world with all the negative inputs our body constantly faces, both from, like you said, foods. We're not meant to eat all the time or light too late at night and not getting enough sleep, not moving enough, not breathing enough fresh air or getting enough sunshine. We've detached from nature in so many ways. And definitely I think you're right, it's not hard to see that we're seeing effects of this. What are some of the things that you typically recommend for people to start overcoming this, that they are in that cycle of fatigue and exhaustion?

Dr. Junger: Well, you know, the big idea is to go back to nature's design as much as possible, you know, given your circumstances in your life. So eating whole foods as opposed to processed food, real foods, foods that your great grandmother or your even your grandmother would recognize. Because if you bring, you know, back your great grandmother and you take her to a supermarket, 90% of the things that's that are sold there she wouldn't even recognize as food. So going back to the ways of nature, right, and then with everything that that entails. You know, sleeping when it gets dark and waking up when it gets light.

And then learning ways how not to let the stress of life affect you. Even when you turn on the TV and you watch the news, especially these days, that can trigger all kinds of fight or flight reactions inside of your body, and that alone can exhaust your adrenals. So that's in general, right? But then when you go into more detail, there's other things that can help you, and there's herbs that can help you like ashwagandha and Rhodiola and licorice and things like that. And acupuncture and, you know, yoga. I mean, there's so many things that put together in a little plan can help you recover your adrenals.

Katie: You mentioned eating seasonal foods in a varied way, basically, only eating what's in season and local, which also lends itself from what I've read toward better gut diversity, letting the different types of bacteria in the body interact with different foods and the prebiotic fibers that are in different types of food. Is there a gut component connection to adrenal fatigue? I know there's obviously so much literature out there about the gut and its important for our health, but is there a connection specifically to adrenal problems?

Dr. Junger: For most people there are, and in fact that can be the whole origin of adrenal fatigue. You know, what happens is...I call the gut our Achilles heel. That's our weakest point in the interaction of our body with our environment. Because your skin is pretty resistant and your lungs, you know, even though they're inside and they're very delicate organs, they can take a lot of abuse. You know, so many people smoke a pack or two a day and live long lives without...you know, of course, it can give you cancer and emphysema and all those kinds of things, but it takes years to really insult and damage your lungs.

But your gut which is the part of your body that's most in touch with the outside world. And even though it's inside of your body and you can't see with your naked eye, you are putting all these things, all these drinks and foods, all these things from the environment, you're putting in there, and they go inside and they touch your gut all the way from your mouth to your anus. So that is the part of our bodies that is most in touch with the environment. And that's the first barrier that's getting broken down between the outside and the inside of the body. And it's not only the gut bacteria, which is a very important part of it, right? Because there's the good bacteria which, you know, we're talking about a lot, the microbiome and the intestinal flora or whatever you wanna call it.

But there's also, when those start dying, there's also the bad bacteria and the parasites, and the fungi, and the viruses. And there's a lot of things that can live in the walls of your intestines and start breaking down the wall of your intestine. And the wall of your intestine needs to be completely intact in order for the food and this stuff that we put in our mouth not to trigger your immune system because on the other side of the wall of your intestines is 80% of your immune system.

And when you start breaking the wall, and there's all these bacteria and undigested food start being exposed to your immune system and the immune system starts reacting and, you know, creating all these alerts and reactions and survival mechanisms and adaptive mechanisms, all that can consume so much energy and can constantly trigger your adrenal glands to be supporting it with production of these energy hormones. And after a while it gets exhausted. So that alone could be the whole cause of your adrenal fatigue or, for most people, a contributing factor for sure.

Katie: That makes perfect sense. And I know another thing that you have talked about in other interviews, as well as I think written about, is the role of just things like pre-hormones, like vitamin D and spending time outside in reducing that overall stress and in healing the body and overcoming some of these modern problems that we're seeing. In fact, I know that I read somewhere that you recommend like very moderate small amount of sun exposure every day is the best way to get vitamin D. But I'm curious so, A, like I'd love to hear your reasoning on that because obviously sun exposure is a controversial thing and I 100% actually agree with you, but also are there other benefits to being outside? Like, you mentioned waking up when the sun rises and going to sleep when the sun sets. Are there benefits we can get from nature just in spending time outdoors?

Dr. Junger: Well, for sure. Listen, back to nature design. We're probably designed to live naked running around in the sun all day long and being exposed to the sun all day long. So now we do the opposite. We live in houses. We go from place to place in little boxes with wheels. We cover ourselves with hats and creams and clothing. So our skin never sees the sun. And just like plants get a lot of energy nutrients from the sun, we are designed to do that as well, vitamin D being just one of them. And, you know, there are scientists now that talk about other effects of the light in your retina and in your brain and production of certain chemicals in your brain.

But let's go to vitamin D, which is the most known, which is not even considered a vitamin anymore. It's more like a hormone and it's known to prevent cancer, to, you know, strengthening immune system, prevent depression. The lack of it is a factor in osteoporosis and the lack of, you know, the ability of the bones to absorb calcium, and dementia, and so many things, right? So there's definitely that benefit from exposure to the sun, plus all the other benefits that are maybe not chemical, but emotional and mental and even spiritual. You know, every time I go to the beach, even if I exercise, I'm renewed and I see the happiness in my kids for just being carefree. They're running around in the sun. There's definitely more benefits that we can think of, of living outside and being more in touch with nature.

Katie: For sure. In fact, as we're talking I'm sitting in my office watching my kids ride by on their bikes and climb trees and spend time outside, and just it's wonderful to think how healthy that is for them. Just, like you said, it's multiple times getting back to nature into the things that we're naturally wired to do. And another thing that you're well known for is your unique approach to cleansing using basically food in a safe way.

And I feel like this is something I'd love to go deep with you on because I think cleansing is a buzzword right now, and there's all kinds of different cleanses out there, some of which I have really serious concerns about how dangerous they can potentially be. But I'd love if you could speak to cleansing and what the different types of cleanses are and how to kind of distinguish one that is safe versus one that isn't, and why we need to give our body the ability to cleanse once in a while.

Dr. Junger: Cleansing, yeah, it's a buzzword but it's not less a real and important because it's a buzzword. And it all depends on who is explaining it and how you think about it. Look at it this way. Practices of cleansing and detoxification have been around for thousands of years, and they are a part of every religion. The Muslims do it for Ramadan, the Jews for Yom Kippur, the Christians for Lent. There's always some kind of fasting or cleansing in a way involved in every religion. Every spiritual giant used to practice it.

But if you look at it from a body physiologic point of view, that is something that our bodies are constantly doing. Cleansing and detoxification is not something that one day you decide to do and therefore, you know, your body will start doing it. Your body is constantly doing it. In fact, if it stops doing it for one minute you will die. One very simple form of cleansing and detoxification is getting rid of carbon dioxide, you know, which is the byproduct or the waste product of cellular metabolism. Your body consumes sugars and oxygen and burns them to produce ATP, and the waste product is CO₂ that is dumped into the blood and gets dissolved in the blood as carbonic acid and then circulates in the blood until it passes through the lungs.

And when it passes for the lungs, it fizzes out as CO₂ which you breathe out. That is a very simple way of cleansing and detoxification, but very important. And then if that stops, if you stop breathing and not putting oxygen inside, you would last longer than if you stop taking out your CO₂. So just like that, the liver is constantly doing its chemical reactions to cleanse and detoxify the body and all the waste products, not only of your internal metabolism, but there are all the waste products that we put in our bodies from the outside, what in functional medicine are called xenobiotics, and 90% of the xenobiotics that we're exposed to that end up in our bloodstream are lipophilic. They only dissolve in fat. They don't dissolve in water.

Now the body, most of the ways of getting rid of toxins is through sweat, breath, the moist in the breath, urine, and feces, and dissolved in water. So all these toxins have to be converted from lipophilic to hydrophilic, from dissolving in fat to dissolving in water. That is done mostly at the level of the liver. So the liver is, you know, one of the main organs in cleansing and detoxification in the body, and that is something that we're born with and then the body has to constantly do. So what I understand as cleansing and detoxification is not something that you're trying to get your body to do. It's something that your body is doing already, but you're just creating the conditions and giving your body the support it needs in order to complete those processes more efficiently, optimally.

So for example, the liver needs certain things, certain raw materials to be able to use for converting these lipophilic xenobiotics or toxins into hydrophilic toxins so that you can pee them out and sweat them out. And part of those are proteins and amino acids. So you have to give the body certain proteins and amino acids in order...I mean proteins are amino acids. But what I'm saying is you have to give those, you know, components for the liver in order to be able to do it. So there's different intensities of turning on, not turning on, but intensifying your detoxification processes.

One of the most important correlations is that when you're digesting, your detoxification processes tend to diminish in intensity because all the work that your body has to do in order to digest takes away from the energy that the body would be using in order for detoxification process. You know, there's so much energy available at any given time and the body has to budget, has to put certain energy for this and put certain energy for that, you know, certain energy for exercise and certain energy for thinking, a certain amount for detoxification, a certain amount for digestion. The more you need energy for digestion, the more you take out from other processes.

Sometimes when you are digesting a lot, you cannot even think because, you know, sometimes after you stuff your body with food, like in Thanksgiving, you can only go and sleep because the body is digesting and using so

much energy that just gets you exhausted and there's nothing else that you can do. So the less that you eat and the less that you digest, the more intense your detoxification processes turn on. The most intense way of doing that is by just drinking water, which is water fasting, but that is really intense. And the problem is that you are not giving the body all the substrates, all the things that the body needs, the molecules that the body needs in order to detoxify some molecules. So you may end up in a more toxic situation.

Thousands of years ago it was okay to water fast because we were not exposed to so many toxins and we were not eating so much and we're not so loaded with toxins. There was not too much for the body to catch up. But if you're going to water fasting these days, it's a different story. So that may be dangerous. It's the same thing with juicing, right? It is a little less intense than water fasting but still very intense. And still you're only giving the body certain nutrients. You're not giving the body any protein, for example. So juice fasting, if done in the midst of a busy life, can also be too intense for people. Now, then comes my way of cleansing, right?

So the way that I promote it and the way that I use it as a medical tool is I decrease the workload of the digestive system by giving people substitution of solid meals by liquid meals. For example, I put people on a liquid breakfast and a liquid dinner and I only let them have a solid meal for lunch. And then I also further diminish the workload of the digestive system during the meal for lunch by not allowing people to eat foods that take a lot of work to digest or that add to the toxic load, right, or that trigger reactions from the body like allergic reactions or sensitivity reactions that will trigger the immune system to work harder, right?

So you can learn how to decrease the workload of the digestive system but still give the body and the liver, mainly all the things it needs to clean up, and then make cleansing and detoxification safe and doable within your busy life. Now, if you take off and go to a spa and do nothing all day but cleansing, then juicing may be appropriate. But if you're gonna do it while you live your busy life and you take your kids to school and you work and prepare dinner and, you know, you're doing all the things that you do every day in the city, yeah, juicing may be too intense. So when you start understanding the ways or the intensities of different cleansing programs, then you start understanding what context you can use them in, what kind of people you can use them for, and what kind of problems you can hope to solve with them.

Katie: Got it. That makes sense. And I know that many celebrities, for instance, whereby your type of cleansing, because it lets them maintain an active lifestyle and everything that they must do while still being able to give the body a break, and which is why I'm so glad we got to talk about it because most of the people listening are parents. And I feel like if parents are probably the busiest people on the planet, we just have so many demands on our time, plus jobs, plus everything else that goes into life. And so I like that approach, especially for people who I hear from who say like, "I would never want to fast or I have low blood sugar I can't fast," or all of those things, it's a way to, like you said, keep building your body with food, but also just give it a break.

And it sounds like it's also a break from the common allergens and from sugars and from alcohol, just things that can stress the body. And so you can kind of just give your entire system a little bit of a break to recharge.

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Katie: But I know also I've read in your work before that you talk about the mental aspect as well. And I'd love for you to go into this about. I've heard you talk about toxic thoughts and how important our thoughts are and our mental attitude and our mindset is for overall health as well. Can you talk about your approach and how you incorporate that?

Dr. Junger: You know, that actually was the way that I went into this whole world of wellness or integrative medicine, if you will. I was in New York, you know, doing my internship residency and fellowship in internal medicine and cardiology. I was super busy. I was on call sometimes three days in a row running around, no time for eating, just, you know, grabbing something from vending machines or the hospital cafeteria, which is basically poison. And I'm so worried with all these problems and potential problems, all this workload that I had. So one day I was riding on a subway in New York and I was looking at this crazy person in front of me talking out loud.

And then it dawned on me that that person was just doing it out loud, but I was having the same conversations inside my head. I know all the time I was thinking about the check I have to pay and this patient and the discussion I was gonna have with my boss, and I even screamed at him in my mind and then even imagined his answer or, you know, three different scenarios, and then constantly thinking. I realized that most of us are like a crazy person, but in silence. We were just listening to all these conversations in our head all the time. And 99% of the time, they're repetitive thoughts, and 99.9% of the times, they're negative for most people. There's lucky people that have positive thinking.

But even the ones that think only positive thoughts are exhausted by their thoughts as well. So we are like beings that don't think thoughts are just happening and they're happening all the time. And they're happening to a point and a degree that they don't let us be present. So that was my first realization of this disease. At the beginning, I thought it was I was crazy, but then I realized that most people are having the same problem. And then one day I was reading, you know, just random books at Barnes and Noble, just picking books and seeing what they said about this or that. And I came by the concept of meditation. And the definition that I remember reading was the meditation was the practice by which you can slow down and even get to stop this habitual broken radio of repetitive negative thoughts that are constantly happening in our heads, whether we want them or not.

And that was like an aha moment for me, you know, which took me to, you know, finish my training and medicine and leave everything behind and go and live for a year in a monastery in India to learn meditation. That's where I was exposed to other types of medicine, right? But if you think about it, that's what most people are having these days. That's the most common underlying and only now being talked about disease of constant thinking. Whether it's positive or negative, you know, of course, negative thinking is worse.

But, you know, this idea of positive thinking that everybody or a lot of people are talking about as the solution for happy life, it's just the other side of the coin. It's just a different aspect, maybe more enjoyable or less suffering than negative thinking. Constant positive thinking is as exhausting as negative thinking. So the goal is no thinking, no automatic thinking, only thinking when we decide to think, right? But that is, you know, what I understand is a state of enlightenment which is basically what we're here for, to get to that state. And there's a lot of things that you can do in order to strengthen that ability of being present and having less thoughts in your head, meditation being one of them.

Katie: If you don't mind sharing, I'm curious what your personal approach and what your day-to-day practice is because not many of us get the experience of living in a monastery for a year. But I feel like you probably have some valuable things that you've taken from that experience. So how do you incorporate that meditation and that calmness into your daily life?

Dr. Junger: Well, you know, a lot of people talk about sitting down for meditation, closing your eyes, and, you know, sitting down in the lotus position. But that's very hard for me and I can't really do. I can't even do what transcendental meditators do, you know, 20 minutes twice a day. Because for a lot of people, the moment they sit down and close their eyes, that's when they really start noticing all the thoughts. Because when you're busy and you're doing this and you're doing that, you're kind of distracted. But when you sit down and you close your eyes and you start trying to meditate, people think, "Oh, this is too difficult for me," or they start realizing how crazy their minds are. So what I do is something that I do all day long and as much as I can remember to do it. In a way I think of it as meditation in action, right?

And I'll tell you right now, as we speak and for the people that are listening to this interview, as you listen to my voice and what I'm saying, put some of your attention also on your feet. As you continue to listen to me, feel your feet from inside, feel them touching your shoe, feel the temperature, feel the humidity, feel the pressure against your socks or the floor or whatever it is that you're wearing. Feel your feet from inside and

continue to feel your feet right now. And as you continue to feel your feet and listen to what I'm saying, start also feeling your hands. Feel what they're touching, feel the temperature.

Don't forget to feel your feet. Feel your feet, your hands and listen to me. And like that, you know, what we just did, and I don't know if you noticed while you were doing it, there's a different flavor to this conversation. There's a different state that you enter. Because what you're doing is you're putting some of your attention in your feet and your hands. And your feet and your hands are right here, right now, are only in the present. Your thoughts can be in the past and in the future or in abstract ideas as we're talking about. But your hands and your feet are right here right now, in the present. And when you put your attention in them, you are anchoring some of your attention in the present, so you are becoming more present.

And you can do that in many, many ways. You can, for example, as you listen to me, listen to the noises outside. You know, just a minute ago there was helicopter passing by here in Venice, California. There's helicopters all day long. And then the dogs barking or the wind, you know, or people talking next door, whatever it is. So you're listening not only to me but to other things around, which are in the present. So you're anchoring your attention the present. You can do it with your eyes as you look at your screen on your computer right now. Just notice, you know, the world behind it on the table where your computer is sitting on. Feel your feet. Feel your hands. Feel your butt against your chair. Listen to the things around.

At the same time, as you're listening to me, all these ways of diverting some of your attention and anchoring it in things present put you in the present, make you more present. And in a way they're kind of counterintuitive because why would you start feeling you're feeling your hands if you're talking to me? Isn't that taking some of attention from what I'm saying, you know, and therefore defeating or make you understand less what I'm saying? But when you start practicing these things, you see that it's the contrary because you're not paying less attention to me.

The attention you're paying to me is the same. But the rest of your attention that now goes to your feet and your hands and whatever else you're doing, listening or seeing things around you, used to go into your judging mind or, you know, as you speak to me, you start remembering things you have to do when we hang up. And those are things that get you distracted, not things that are right here in the present like, you know, the feeling of your body. Do you follow?

Katie: I do. That's so powerful, just to be present like that. Like, you're right. We get so detached from that just in all of the busyness of life and just to actually be in your body for a moment.

Dr. Junger: And it's not about being in your body for a moment. It's about being in your body all the time. I remember this maybe 30, 40 times a day. And whenever I remember this, even if I'm having a conversation with somebody, even if I'm having a work interview or whatever it is, it goes better than it would go if I didn't do those things. So the more that you practice, the more that you do, the better your life flows and the more present you are.

Katie: I love that. Like you, I have trouble just sitting still in the idea of thinking of nothing. That's very difficult. So I love that this is so much more practical and it's something I can focus on. It's tangible versus kind of that abstract concept of just open your mind or empty your mind seems much more difficult with some of the forms of meditation for sure.

Dr. Junger: Unattainable.

Katie: Also, I'd love to circle back a little bit to get back to a more medical topic. Your residency was in cardiology and you still are considered by far an expert in this. I would love to get your take on why do you think we're seeing such a rise in heart disease and cardiac problems? Even still, I know that it's not recognized, but it is a bigger killer of women than even breast cancer, for instance. It's a huge issue. So I'd love your take on what that integrative approach that you have on some of the factors you think are still causing this increase in heart disease and some things we can do especially as women to kind of counteract that.

Dr. Junger: Well, that's what we've been talking about, you know, the way that we...the stress in our lives, the chemicals we're exposed to. The madness of modern life that is what the cause of heart disease and most chronic diseases are. And, you know, we can go into specifics but that explains it. The big picture explains it. And, you know, one of the things that we're talking about, for example, the lack of vitamin D is also linked to cardiovascular diseases. So that's one practical thing that everybody can do. You know, most modern doctors...I mean it's changing now. A lot of Western-trained doctors are ordering, you know, vitamin D levels on your blood tests. But if your doctor doesn't, then ask him for it. And if you don't have enough, taking it is gonna lower your risk of coronary and other heart problems.

But basically, one thing that is important for most people to understand is that most chronic diseases and heart disease is...or chronic disease are linked in a way. They have a common factor in a way, that is inflammation, right? And inflammation in the body leads to chronic diseases, maybe minutes after, maybe hours after, maybe months, and maybe sometimes decades after the inflammation is triggered and maintained, right? But inflammation is the main problem at the root of all the chronic diseases of the modern. And where does inflammation start? Mostly in the gut. So there we go back to what we were talking about before.

Katie: I love that approach. And it seems so much more effective and holistic than just some of the narratives we've been told before. It's just, you know, saturated fat causes heart disease, which now they say there's much more to that story or it's, you know, blood pressure, cholesterol or all of these things. I feel like the holistic approach, when you look at it through your lens of information, that makes so much sense.

Dr. Junger: But those things are true. And those are part of what, you know, triggers and maintains inflammation right? So like hydrogenated oils are part of, you know, the things that trigger or maintain or worsen inflammation. Smoking, high blood pressure, and diabetes. But they're all part of, you know, of the group of chronic diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, and all these things. And they all end up causing for some people heart disease, for some people cancer, for some people Alzheimer's, right, depending on your

genetic predispositions and your individual circumstances and conditions. But most chronic diseases today are born from inflammation that started maybe sometimes years before.

Katie: That makes perfect sense. I think there's so much wisdom and lot of approach, and I'll make sure to link to the things we've talked about. I know you've written about your cleansing approach and your books to make sure people can find those to go deeper if they wanna like really take a deep dive into how to reduce inflammation and how you start reducing these factors that we're facing in modern life. And I can't believe we've flown through our time because you're so easy to talk to. And a somewhat selfish question I'd love to ask toward the end of the interview is, if there's a book or favorite books that you recommend, besides your own, that have really had an impact on your life because I'm an avid reader. I'm always looking for new book ideas. So I'd love to hear yours.

Dr. Junger: Well, in the realm of, you know, spirituality, and thinking, and enlightenment, that kind of subject, there's one book that really basically changed my life and I keep on reading over and over and again and again and every time I read it, I understand in a completely different way. And it's just incredible. It's called "In Search of the Miraculous" by Peter Demianovich Ouspensky. Ouspensky was a philosopher and mathematician and he wrote a lot of books in different subjects in Russia until he met his spiritual teacher, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff. This is where I got all these ideas of meditation and action and diverting my attention to present things and things like that.

That book really changed my life and continues to change my life in many ways. And, you know, in the medical realm, there are so many really good books that I have read but I'll tell you a new one that just came out by a friend of mine called "Ketotarian" which is doing the keto diet in a vegetarian way, and then the doctor is Will Cole. It's a really, really cool book. But there's so, so many books that are good these days that it's difficult to choose between one or another.

Katie: I agree. And I have added those to my list, especially "In Search for the Miraculous." That's a new one I had not heard off and I can't wait to dive into that. And for anyone who wants...

Dr. Junger: Not an easy read but so worth it.

Katie: Wonderful, I can't wait. And for anyone who wants to continue to learn from you after this episode is over and to stay in touch with your work, where can people find you online to learn more about you?

Dr. Junger: You know, I have the books that you mentioned out in every bookstore and they're also an audio book. They can visit my website at my company, the Clean Program in which we make available the tools for cleansing and detoxification. We have this incredible 21-day and also a 7-day kit that you don't need to think about and you don't need to juice and, you know, everything is provided to you, the shakes and the probiotics and the antimicrobials. So you can do a really balanced detox program. And that's at www.cleanprogram.com. I also have an Instagram account, Dr. Alejandro Junger. You're gonna see a lot of pictures of my kids there but, you know, I also put some information out.

Katie: Wonderful. I'll make sure all of those are linked to the show notes at wellnessmama.fm, so any of you listening can find them and stay in touch. But Dr. Junger, thank you so much for spending your time with us today. I believe time is our most valuable asset, and I'm so honored that you shared some of your time and your wisdom with us.

Dr. Junger: My pleasure, anytime.

Katie: Thank you. And thanks to all of you for listening, as always, and I hope to see you again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama" podcast.

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.