



Episode 228: Using Buddies In My Belly to Teach Kids About Health

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is brought to you by Ready. Set. Food!, a new company revolutionizing food allergy prevention in children. We all know that this problem is on the rise, and most of us know someone who has a child with food allergies, or have had this experience ourselves. There are many theories for this and certainly many aspects that need to be addressed like gut health and immune support. Ready Set Food is taking the cutting edge research and science and using it in a practical way to help babies and children avoid food allergies in the first place. Here's how. The most up to date studies are showing that carefully calculated early exposure in the right amounts can stop many cases of food allergies! Ready Set Food makes this easy with a simple system that can be added to breastmilk, formula or baby's first foods to give incremental and calculated exposure to the top allergens like peanuts, egg and milk. When used as directed, this can reduce the chance of childhood allergies by up to 80% and it is recommended and overseen by many of the nation's top pediatricians. Learn more about this evidence based approach and how to integrate it if you have a baby at readyssetfood.com/wellnessmama

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Katie: Hello and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie, from wellnessmama.com. And I'm here today with Sarah Morgan who's also known as The Gene Queen. She's known as this for her innovative ideas that connect science to everyday life in a way that impacts thousands of people. Albert Einstein once said, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." And this has inspired Sarah to write and communicate in a way that a four-year-old or a 40-year-old will understand.

Sarah is the founder and the CEO of Buddies In My Belly, which is a health education company delivering serious science for serious health, but in a way that is seriously fun for everyone. We're gonna talk about that today. It's gonna be a super fun interview. So Sarah, welcome and thanks for being here.

Sarah: Thanks so much, Katie.

Katie: I love that quote so much. And I feel like it's such a testament to mom life because we get asked, you know, those tough questions all the time, and we have to figure out how to answer. Why is the sky blue? Or how are babies made? In a very simple way and easy to understand way. So I'd love to start there. Can you tell us a little bit of the story and how you came up with the idea for Buddies In My Belly, and for this whole concept?

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. You know, as a mom myself, Katie, with a master's degree in nutrition, I remember I was looking at my daughter, she was two and a half at the time, and I began to imagine, you know, "What would it be like if she not only could understand these important concepts about her health but really actively participate in her health?" And, you know, just like you said, I think as moms, you know, we want the best for our kids, and we wanna feed them the best foods. We wanna keep them healthy.

But sometimes, I don't know, at least for me, it can be exhausting. And it kind of feels like we can be nagging. Or maybe, you know, you might be the only person in your home that has these values. And sometimes, that can feel really lonely. So, you know, I wanted to create a way that we can engage the whole family and really make health fun for everyone. And I just thought like, "What a world that would be?" Right? So it really took me on this adventure of creativity. And, you know, if we look at childhood in America, we really do have a big problem to solve when it comes to our children's health.

And the reality is, our kids are sick. You know, we look at the stats, it's like one in three are overweight. One in six have learning disabilities. One in nine have asthma. One in 10 have ADHD. One in 12, food allergies. One in 20, seizures. And the updated statistic is one in 36 children are being diagnosed with autism today. So, you know, we look at that, it's like half of the children in America have a chronic illness or overweight. And by 2025, which is just around the corner, 80% of children will have a chronic illness that impacts the rest of their life.

And, you know, Katie, I was looking at that. I'm like, "I'm not willing to accept this as our new reality." And, you know, it's like I believe we can fix this, and we can make it fun, because, you know, our children are our future. So really Buddies In My Belly was created to solve a problem in our world today. And, you know, a little backstory on myself, I love to learn. And in my master's program, I learned about some of these foundational aspects of the human body, and how it thrives at the proper foods and nutrients.

And the reality is, you know, the complexities of our bodies are so incredible that modern science is, you know, really still trying to figure it all out. And one of the things we've discovered is we have trillions of microscopic organisms that live in our digestive tract. So two to four pounds of who we are, are the friendly health-promoting bacteria that collectively we call the microbiome. And, you know, it works like an organ regulating the health of our digestive tract, immune system, brain, heart, lungs, the absorption of nutrients, excretion of waste, and so many other things we're still discovering.

And this discovery of the microbiome has been a literal scientific breakthrough in human health. And I believe it's something that everybody on the planet needs to know about because it has the power to change your life and to change...it really has the power to change the health of every person on the planet. But there's another problem, Katie. You know, though, I love swimming in the Kiki ocean of science, I learned early on in my clinical practice, as well as just interacting with my friends and family that there really is this major scientific, you know, gap between the language we use and then the everyday person. And, you know, people are afraid of what they don't understand.

So that's really what led me to, you know, go to my most inspirational historical figure, Albert Einstein. And he's the one who said, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." Which I think is like, you know, aka mom language, right, that we all try to use. So I really tried to think about, "Okay, how can I connect science to everyday life in the way that a four-year-old or a 40-year-old can understand?"

So I was sitting in my living room one day, and I'm like, "Okay, well, you know, these friendly bacteria, they really are our buddies. And well, they live mostly in our belly." And it was just this, like, bam, the concept came and, you know, I tested it on my daughter, on my husband, some of my clients, and everybody's like, "This is awesome." So I'm like, "Okay, I have the concept, but now I've gotta figure out, you know, in a book, how do we actually illustrate this, and then, you know, make it fun?"

So I, through a process, found my illustrator and now creative director for our brand, and I was like... his name is Henry Daniel Bell, I call him Danny. And he's like, "You know, I think we can make bacteria cute. Yeah, we could totally do that." So we started thinking like, "Okay, how do we do this in a way that, you know, everybody can talk about it, kids can connect with it?"

So bacteria have these complex names, right? Like Lactobacillus, Bifidobacterium, Streptococcus, and they're kind of intimidating. So we were like, "Okay, what if we shorten it, right, to like, Lactie, Biffie, Strepie, and Ba-Silly and we were like, "That's it." So we created these characters in a way that, you know, health can be fun. We can talk about it as a family. We can run after these concepts together as families and communities.

And I just love how buddies gives all of us this common language to use about this important concept of the microbiome. Because a lot of people, and you say that word, and they're like, "What? What's a microbiome?" You know. Or you say, you know, "Gut health," and they're like, "Wait a minute. Are you talking about my belly?" Like, "What's gut health?" And, you know, my passion is to really create the Sesame Street of health for everyone.

Katie: I love that. And I love that Einstein quote so much. I'm such a fan of him. And I know he also said, "Everybody is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it's stupid." Which is another quote that's inspired another friend of mine, Jim Kwik to say, "You know, with kids, it's not about how smart are they, but it's about...how are they smart." And I think both of those really illustrate being able to take an alternative approach to learning. And I think that's what you've done brilliantly in this.

I know we have the book and my kids are fascinated by it. They carry around these little plush bacteria, which is super fun because then we get to geek out on the science together. But kind of walk us through a little bit like, how do you explain to kids in the book. Give us that Albert Einstein simple explanation on a couple points?

Sarah: Yeah, well, I'd love to actually read a little bit of the book if that's okay with you. I'd love to give people a little sample of that. So, you know, we start off... there's a character in the book she's a little girl named Ruby, and Ruby is actually my daughter's best friend. So everything in the book has, you know, a really special connection. So Ruby starts off as just kind of saying, "Hi, I'm Ruby. And I wanna tell you a story about the itsy bitsy buddies that live in my belly. The buddies are my friends, and they are called probiotics. They are microscopic, that means they are teeny tiny, smaller than a grain of sand. And we have a really fun way of illustrating that with..." you know, she's kind of pointing to a little chalkboard where the buddies are drawn on the chalkboard.

And then we have this, you know, idea of how, you know, we take care of each other. "And when I eat food I chew it up, and it goes down in my belly, and the buddies keep chewing the food and pull out all the vitamins, and minerals, and nutrients to keep me healthy." And Ruby's got a little apple, you know, she's biting into and then the buddies on the next page, all have like a little piece of the apple, you know, that they're nibbling on as well.

And then it goes into, you know, some of the different buddies, like, I'm gonna go to my favorite scene that's super fun that actually some of the doctors that are using this book in their practices will show their patients. So this is the Ba-Silly, so Ba-Silly is kind of a superhero. He's the little blue guy with the red mask. And he's my favorite buddy for protecting me against colds. And then on the other page, we have some of the foods, and it says "Apples, and peas, and yogurt, and cheese are some of the things Ba-Silly needs."

And then there's a fight scene when you flip the page, and it says "When Ba-Silly eats his favorite foods, he gets in a superhero mood. Bad germs don't stand a chance against Ba-Silly's superhero stance. Haiya!" And Ba-Silly's beating up these little bad germs. And they actually have names like H. pylori, and C. diff, E.Coli, and MRSA and Salmonella. So, again, you know, our passion is to really connect this serious science for serious health in a way that's seriously fun for everyone.

Katie: I love that. It's such a fun book. And I think it's also...what I love about it so much is that I feel like so often we undervalue how much our kids are capable of understanding, and we kind of dumb things down. And I love that you have kept the science and kept the explanation, but just made it fun. You didn't like gloss over anything or dumb it down. You just made it super interesting and easy to understand, which I think kids just thrive on that because they are so capable. They're like a sponge. And I think you did that really, really well, and it's so much fun for them to learn that way.

So I'd love to kind of segue from that into...I know that we both share a passion for improving health for the next generation. And you've shared the stats, the really sobering statistics about what our kids are facing even as early as just, you know, seven years from now. So I'd love to hear your take on what we can do as families

and especially with our children at a young age to start changing this to take care of our guts and our immune system?

Sarah: Yeah, this is where it gets so fun, and I get so excited because you're right. You know, like, I remember when I first came up with this concept, my daughter was, again, like two and a half. And, Katie, she got it. Like, immediately she got it. Well, I will say at first I was like, "Okay, a lot of people say, 'bugs'" you know, for probiotics are like the bugs, you know, that live in your digestive tract. So I was like, "Okay, bugs in my belly." And I tried it on my daughter, and then we started putting together some of our initial illustrations. And she looks at me, and she goes, "But mommy, I thought they were ants and spiders in my belly."

And I was like, "Oh, no. Kids take things too literally." You know, we can't say that. So anyways, it's just so fun how much they get it. So, you know, one thing I would say is like, pick up the book, right? Like, get the book, "Buddies In My Belly," read it with your kiddos. And it's just a launching point to be able to, you know, start the conversation. And then what I get so excited about and I see families doing is you get to talk about this stuff, you know, at mealtime, when you're having breakfast, or you're packing your kids' lunch as they go to school.

And you're thinking about like, "Okay, you know, we wanna make sure we feed the buddies well. And, you know, we don't wanna feed the bad germs, right, because they're gonna beat up the buddies and then we're not gonna be healthy." And there's a lot of fun interactions with that. I actually just had a shopping experience with my daughter the other day. We were at the grocery store, and without any prompting her, Katie, we're pushing the cart down the aisle. She goes, "Mommy, that's good for the buddies. That's good for the buddies. That's good for the buddies. That's bad for the buddies. That's bad for the buddies." And it's so fun for her to be able to get it.

And again, it's this idea, you know, that we wanna help everybody in the household starting with our little ones understand this concept of the microbiome. Because if they implement this, and they get it, and they feel empowered, they get to make choices themselves. That sets them up for a lifetime of good health. So, you know, I really have five things that I encourage families to do when we talk about taking care of the buddies.

And, you know, in the book, the whole book is about how we feed the buddies and, you know, take care of them, and then they take care of us. And food first always. So the first thing is, you know, we wanna eat whole foods that Mother Nature grew. And we have a really cool food chart in the back of the book that, you know, is a tear out that you can stick on your fridge. I have one on my fridge now. And, you know, the whole idea is we want lots of diversity of plant foods and all the different colors.

So, you know, the chart's divided up based off of like red, and orange, and yellow, and green, and blue, and even the tan, and kids get to check off, you know, how they feed the buddies, these different colored foods, throughout the week. And the goal is 25 different plant species a week as a family that we want to be consuming. And that's based off research from the Human Microbiome Project. And we also have a super fun Buddies in My Belly food plate, where it's like, "Hey, this is what mealtime should look like." Or your kids

actually get to say, like, "Oh, this is how we should be eating," you know, and the different foods that the buddies need.

And that's really based off this idea that fiber, which we call prebiotics, it's a type of food for the buddies, and we wanna make sure we're doing a good job of that. And really interesting, there was a microbiome researcher, who, you know, he decided, he's like, "Okay, I'm gonna eat fast food from the, you know, big arches restaurant for 10 days." And he mapped out his microbiome or the buddies beforehand. And then after he ate this food only for 10 days, he lost 40% of his buddies. And then, you know, he switched back to eating like a great whole food-based diet. And after two weeks, he's still hadn't regained his buddies.

So, you know, we now know that antibiotics. There's a recent study that came out that one course of antibiotics kind of blows up the bad germs and the good buddies, and it can take up to a year to reestablish, you know, your good buddies. So eating foods, food first always, another big one. My second one, Katie, is sleep. You know, what I like to say is, "Hey, the buddies get tired too, and they need sleep." And that's a really great conversation you can have with your kids.

Our research shows more sleep equals better buddies, and our quality of sleep is very important. And what I say is, you know, "If you have trouble sleeping or your kids are having trouble sleeping, you wanna think about their buddies. Because Biffie, bifidobacterium in the book, makes Gabba which is one of those brain chemicals that gives us that calm, cool, collected, helps us get into our good sleep cycle. We have a really cool resource, change your habits, change your buddies that you can, you know, look over with your kids. And we go over, you know how important sleep is.

Another one that we talked about in the book is, you know, we get thirsty, and so do the buddies. So we wanna, you know, give the buddies some water. We also mentioned Kombucha in the book as well. But our quality of our water is really important. And, you know, there's things in our tap water, unfortunately, that hurt the buddies like chlorine, right? We don't think about that. It's like we use it in the pool to kill the bad stuff, but even, you know, regular drinking of that kind of water hurts our buddies.

So we can talk about that with our kid's, right? And a simple filter on the fridge, that carbon filter remove that. If you wanna go deeper, you can look at ewg.org, see your water quality. You know, if you got contaminants, you can purify your water. So that's three is water.

Number four is movement, right? We all wanna move. We need to be bodies in motion, kids and adults, right? And people who move regularly outside of diet and what they're eating have better buddies. So, you know, again, we wanna make it fun for everybody. Like in the book, Lactie gives us energy and puts us in a good mood. And, you know, there's Ruby, like, running on a soccer field. So we can talk about that even when your kids are in sports, or they're playing outside. It's like, "Hey, this is really good for you, and it's good for your buddies too. They love to move."

And then, you know, number five is looking at stress. Which, you know, I know you talk about this as well, and it's just a common denominator for kids and adults in our modern world. And stress comes from, you know, our mind, our emotions, physical things like lack of sleep, but it also comes from food, right? High sugar, food, processed foods, those are stress to our buddies. And it's a really fun way to have that conversation with your kiddos of, you know, like, "Hey, how are your buddies gonna do if you eat, you know, a bunch of candy and cupcakes at that birthday party?" And let them kind of think about it and figure it out.

And then we have chemical stress, things like pesticides, which, unfortunately, we have these residuals on our food. And I know you talk about that as well but really interesting stuff. You know, some of these pesticides are designed to deplete plants of manganese, which is a trace element. The really interesting thing is that what happens is we, as humans, actually get depleted in manganese as well. And guess what? Lactie needs manganese to live well in our bellies. And so, you know, those are things that kind of impact our buddies in, you know, around about way that's a little bit more complex but are important for us to think about with our food sourcing.

And then medications, Katie. This is a big one. You know, some of us know about antibiotics. You know, again, that's kind of like that bomb in the belly and it just wrecks everything. And they're really working on new technology where these antibiotics can be more specific to target only the bad, you know, germs and doesn't impact our buddies. But we have other things like, reflex...our reflux med, excuse me, that you know, even babies are put on. And we have to think about that in terms of how that impacts their developing buddies. You know, antidepressants, steroids, things like...even ibuprofen can impact the buddies.

And there's a research study that came out about all these different classes of medications that actually can negatively impact our buddies. So we wanna be thinking about that. And this is what I tell people. We wanna get outside. We wanna get some sun. We wanna breathe deeply, and we wanna laugh; laughter, so important and having fun. We wanna eat foods that Mother Nature grew. We wanna drink clean water, and we wanna rest well at night. And when we do that are really taking care of us well, and we're taking care of our buddies as well.

Katie: I love that. And I would love to go deeper on a couple of those points because I feel like those are definite pain points for a lot of moms. And I think shifting the conversation with kids also really helps moms. So, for instance, on the point of more variety in our food, I know that...I've read quite a bit on this topic. And we know that, for instance, just a couple generations ago, we were eating hundreds of different species of plants in any given year. And now, most people are lucky if that's in the dozens because we're eating the same things over and over.

And we know from the studies that variety is really, really important to feeding like you said, the prebiotics in the gut. But on the contrast to that, we see kid's meals that are the exact same...usually like five types of food everywhere you go. And there's this kind of society-wide expectation that the kids only like those types of foods. So I know I get this question a lot of, how do you get the kids to eat foods that are not just kids meal foods, and how do you get them to like them? So I would love to hear your suggestions, both as a mom and on the research side, of some practical advice we can give to moms to help kids incorporate more variety into their diet?

Sarah: Such a good question and a topic. You know, like, if mamas are listening, and they're like, "Oh, my gosh. This is me with my kids right now." It's like, you're so not alone, right? And I think the biggest thing is that...again, like you said, and I love even in your bio on your website about, you know, you're like expert in answering the question, why? Because kids ask, "Why." You know, like, "Well, why? Why do I have to eat that? Why can I just have chicken nuggets and french fries all the time?"

And, you know, again, their brains are so smart and they catch on to these concepts. So the first thing is, let's teach them about their buddies, right? Like, that's a really good way where we take that pressure off of us as moms. Again to feel like a maybe almost we're pushing and nagging, and it's like, "Oh, this is so exhausting." And, you know, we're tired as moms, right? It's a lot of work, and especially on a night, maybe you didn't get a lot of sleep. It's easy to just like, "Oh, maybe I'll try tomorrow." And instead of it being on you, let's put it on the kiddos, right?

And I get so excited to think about when kids are learning about like, "I have a brain, and I have a heart, and I have a liver," you know, in school. It's like they're learning like, "I have buddies. And oh, wow, they're actually the most important things for my health as a human being." Right? Like, I like to say, "Our buddies are our best friends for life." So when we teach our kids, it's like, "Whoa, I have these little, you know, itty biddy buddies that live in my belly, and I've gotta feed them," it becomes a responsibility that's on them.

And, you know, the food chart is really fun because...you know, again, I think kids like to...they wanna be in control, right? Like so much of parenting is that balance of, you know, you have to sometimes exert your will, and they wanna exert theirs. But you can say like, "Hey, you know, let's talk about red foods. The buddies need red foods. So we have apples, we have kidney beans, we've got beets, we have bell peppers, cherries, grapes, you know, red potatoes, pomegranates, raspberries, watermelon. You know, there's all these examples, which one do you wanna eat today to feed your buddies?"

Okay, let's think about our yellow foods. Okay, so we've got, you know, pear, and pineapple, and bananas, and peppers. And, you know, there's all these examples on the food chart, and then we let kids have a choice, right? They're thinking about it. And what's so cool, and I've seen this happen not only with my daughter, but also, you know, friends that have the book or just people who email me. They're like, "Sarah, we're out eating out or, you know, we're at a friend's house, and our kids at dinner time are thinking like, 'Oh, mommy, this is really good buddy food.' Or, 'When I'm picking out what I'm eating, like, I should at least try this because, you know, I've gotta take care of my buddies, and they would want some of that too.'"

And so it takes a lot of the pressure off of, you know, moms to make this happen. And then our buddies food plate too is...you know, half of the plate is veggies. You know, I think, as Americans, we've lost...like you talked about, we don't have this diversity in our diet. But also, we've lost this idea of even what meal time should look like with the foods. And, you know, again, as moms, you can make it simple. Like, we've created a "Buddies In My Belly" eCookbook. Our tagline is "Simple recipes for your complex life" because I am very pragmatic in nature.

And you know, it's ways for us to get more of this diversity with some of those recipes, but just in a way that it's not such a struggle, right, where you're gonna give up after a week or two. Because this is the long haul, right? It's really lifestyle that we wanna establish in our kiddos.

Does that mean you're perfect? No, not at all. Am I perfect? No. But every day, you know, we're striving towards more and more of that. And, you know, make it fun too. Like, we're working on some apps like games where we go to the grocery store, and it's kind of like, you know, hunting for different foods. But tell your kids like "Okay, let's get something at the grocery store that we've never bought before." It's like what's Bok Choy, and let's find it. Like, make it a scavenger hunt and fun, and involve them. And then, you know, for you, it's like, "Okay, now I gotta make something with Bok Choy," right? So the more it can be an adventure and fun, I think the longer...and there's more staying power in all of that.

Katie: Absolutely.

This podcast is brought to you by Ready Set Food, a new company revolutionizing food allergy prevention in children. We all know that this problem is on the rise, and most of us know someone who has a child with food allergies, or have had this experience ourselves. There are many theories for this and certainly many aspects that need to be addressed like gut health and immune support. Ready Set Food is taking the cutting edge research and science and using it in a practical way to help babies and children avoid food allergies in the first place. Here's how. The most up to date studies are showing that carefully calculated early exposure in the right amounts can stop many cases of food allergies! Ready Set Food makes this easy with a simple system that can be added to breastmilk, formula or baby's first foods to give incremental and calculated exposure to the top allergens like peanuts, egg and milk. When used as directed, this can reduce the chance of childhood allergies by up to 80% and it is recommended and overseen by many of the nation's top pediatricians. Learn more about this evidence based approach and how to integrate it if you have a baby at readyssetfood.com/wellnessmama

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Katie: I think more also than equipping kids to make really informed decisions to their whole life. And I think the younger we teach this, the more it sticks as well. So I love that you're starting with the youngest age. And like you mentioned, your daughter, only two, was able to understand.

Another area where I feel like moms need the support and the knowledge so much is the antibiotic issue. And you mentioned the statistic that, you know, one course of antibiotics can change your gut bacteria for up to a year. And I've even seen some that say that it causes permanent changes that we can't get back most of it. But there is permanent changes that happen in our gut. I also know that I've had recent podcast guests that have said, you know, "Antibiotic resistance is becoming a very serious issue. And it's one that, especially during our kids' generation, could potentially become an extremely serious problem."

So I love that you're educating about this as well. Because while my life has been saved by the medical community, and I think there's absolutely a time and a place for all aspects of medicine, I do think that, especially with kids, antibiotics are being overused, and our kids are suffering as a result. And so I know in our family, we tend to avoid antibiotics unless they're absolutely necessary, which means we're not using them for things like ear infections where statistically most of the time they're not even going to be effective. And we're just trying to be really judicious in how we use them.

But I'd love to hear your approach to this as well because I totally get it, and I absolutely empathize with moms. Because when your child is sick, you wanna do something, and you want them to have relief. And I know we've turned to a lot of natural remedies, but I'd love to hear your take on what do you guys do when a child is sick? And how do you use antibiotics responsibly? And how do you avoid them when they're not needed?

Sarah: Such a good question. And, you know, you're right. Like, this is gonna be one of the biggest issues that we're gonna face, you know, that our children are gonna face because bacteria are really good at mutating. And they do it very quickly, and they're super smart. And, you know, what I like to say is, you know, we've got these bad germs, and they become like these really evil villains, right, that it's really important.

Number one, what you can do as parents is you've gotta make sure your kiddos have really good buddies in their belly. And that starts when they're born, right? So we know that when a baby is born vaginally, that's where they get their first gulps while they're delivered through the vaginal canal of their buddies. And, you know, that gets established and then breast milk, and all the really cool factors that are in breast milk help all those buddies start to kind of grow, and establish, and make their home in the belly.

C-section babies...you know, again C-section save lives. We want to do C-sections when they're absolutely needed not out of convenience. But those babies get "buddies" that are really from the skin, and then also they're exposed to hospital bad germs that are already, Katie, resistant to a lot of antibiotics. You know, that are...a lot of those bugs that kind of live or the bad germs that live in hospital settings.

So if, you know, you've had a C-section, I highly recommend probiotics for those infants. Like, you just start them right away. We have a pediatrician that's on our advisory board for Buddies In My Belly, and you know, he's a big fan of this. It's just super, super important. Mommas, if you can breastfeed, you know, it's very, very helpful, in that establishment of your buddies.

And then, you know, when your kids start eating food, it is so important that we start this conversation of diversity, lots of different foods. You know, foods that are rich in fiber, whole foods, keeping sugar, low sugar feeds. Her name's candy, aka Candida, and she is the leader of the bad germs. And she will overtake the system. And, you know, we know that 60% to 80% of the immune system function actually happens from our buddies that live in our belly. So number one is we want really strong, healthy buddies for kids. That's going to help them where they're not going to need antibiotics.

And Strepie in the book...I love Strepie. She is a key crusader in fighting off our ear, nose, and throat foreign invaders. And, you know, we think about things like Strepie's evil twin or strep throat. And we know there's actually certain types of good buddies that colonize in our mouth, in our nose, in our throat that will keep the bad germs from being able to colonize and grow there. They kind of crowd out all of the bad guys. So we actually reduce the need for these antibiotics again.

Now, when there might be a situation where you need an antibiotic, my biggest suggestion is find a pediatrician that is conservative about dosing and prescribing antibiotics. So you used the example of ear infections. Most ear infections are viral in nature. They're not bacterial. And, you know, for so long before we knew about the buddies and the consequences of antibiotics, it was kind of like, "Wow, we don't wanna have a secondary infection with bacteria, so we'll just give kids, you know, antibiotics while they have an ear infection."

What's the best course of action is you go in, you know, your kid maybe has an ear infection, we recognize most likely it's viral. There's things that you can do, depending on your child's age, even things like vitamin D. And I'm a big fan of elderberry. It's a great natural anti-viral if it's dosed properly. Those are some ways that you can kind of encourage, help your, you know, child's immune system as well as probiotics. Those are also very helpful as long as they've been clinically studied, especially in children. We wanna be really picky about that. Those are some great things that you can do naturally to help your child's immune system be stronger to fight that off.

And then, you know, a good pediatrician will say, "Hey, we're gonna wait. And I want you to come back in two days, and I'm gonna look at your kid's ears again." And typically, an ear infection will resolve within, you know, two to five days, and you might have to make a couple extra visits, right? And if you're a working parent, that's more work, right? So sometimes it gets into just those practical side of things where it gets harder, but, you know, that's something that you can do to avoid that.

And then there are times where, you know, antibiotics are needed, like you said. And I am thankful for modern medicine. You know, penicillin saved a lot of lives in World War II, but what we didn't realize is, you know, the consequences. So now we have to find this balance. And what I'm really excited for is when we have

this newer technology that allows us to target, you know, the bad germs in a way that the buddies, you know, aren't impacted when we think about things like antibiotics. But, again, good buddies, that alone is going to reduce your need for antibiotics for your family.

Katie: Absolutely. And I know that we've worked with paediatricians and doctors who are much more careful about antibiotic use. And I've even heard them say things like, "Over 95% of things kids are gonna pick up will resolve within two, three days if you just let the immune system handle it. And I think that's interesting because usually, that's about when you see, you know, antibiotics "working." So often, if we're just willing to have that patience, children's bodies are very smart at learning how to adapt and handle things.

And also from a mom's perspective, I feel like, in order for the immune system to become effective for lifelong health, it has to actually do some work when they're younger. So kids will naturally get a few childhood illnesses, and that's actually part of their immune system learning how to handle that. And it's actually... I've seen how some really fascinating emerging data that when we suppress that too much, and when we suppress every fever, and when we suppress every bacterial infection, the immune system doesn't really get to learn as much as it would. And there could be longer-term consequences when it comes to things like autoimmune disease, or even more serious things down the road.

So I love that you are bringing awareness to this and helping parents and kids feel like they have practical tools to start handling things more naturally. I'll make sure we link to...I know you've got some resources, and we do as well on natural remedies and some ways to tackle those things naturally. But I feel like it also goes down to the root of this being that we're focusing with kids on education, and letting them be empowered to make decisions on their own and not always feeling like we as parents have to be the bad guys, or the, you know, food guardian or whatever. Because when kids understand it, they actually do make good decisions.

And so I'll share at least from my side. We have six kids, and while at home, we pretty much eat clean all the time. Even though I, you know, write about the health side of things all the time and my kids are educated on that, I don't at all control what food they eat when they're not at home. And I think this is part of that teaching them to be able to make good decisions. Because if you control the decisions all the time, they never get to...they experience that to fail once in a while and to learn from that.

So the way we look at it in our house is I'm in charge of feeding the family. And so I pick foods that are healthy, and that's what's in our house. But when they're not here, they're responsible for making choices about what they think they need to feed their body. And that means that occasionally, they've eaten sugar or eaten food that I would not have fed them other places. And often, they've felt bad when that happened.

But I feel like those are important learning experiences for them because it empowers them to see the consequences of their actions and to learn so that they can make long-term healthy decisions. And it also avoids that whole forbidden fruit idea where they can never have it and so then they want it. I'm curious how you approach this as well. I know your daughter may be a little younger, but I'm curious of your approach.

Sarah: Yeah, I love this. And, you know, information is power, right? And information is power for our children, and information is power for moms. I think, you know, what you're talking about as well is it's really easy as a mama to get in that, you know, fear mindset, right? Like if a fever comes up or something's happening with your kid, and you're like, "I've gotta do something right away." And so I just I love that you bring that up about one going back to that...like the body is set up to heal itself. And, you know, obviously, there are times where we need to intervene, but waiting a couple days is not a bad thing.

And, you know, Katie, I do the exact same thing with my daughter. You know, we eat really healthy. Again, I like chocolate, and I like wine. Wine actually has been found to have 11 different strands of probiotic buddies. I was like, "Yes, there's a reason." And Chocolate too is, you know, a prebiotic, good for the buddies. But, you know, again, we make good choices but my daughter, when she goes places, she kind of has the options as well. And it was really neat this summer she was doing summer camp with her school, and you know, she's like, "Mommy, can I order in lunch at the school?" And I said, "Yeah, you know, let's give it a try." And she came home that day, and she's like, "Mommy, I don't really like the lunch at school. It's not very good. And I don't feel very good from it." So that's really fun.

And then, you know, we are actually working on Buddies in My Belly episodes. So those will be available early 2019, which I'm super excited about. They're so fun, where we actually have the little plushy's and they kind of go on adventures and do things. And Biffie is our buddy that helps us go poop. And in our episodes, Biffie has a little poop chart and, you know, talk to the kids about poops. But that's another thing my daughter is really learning is this concept of like, "Oh, when I eat these certain foods, maybe I get a bellyache. Maybe I don't. But then, you know, I also wanna see how the buddies are doing, how Biffie is doing."

She'll be like, "Mommy, Biffie was really good today," you know, after she comes out of the bathroom. Or she's like, you know, "Mommy, Biffie wasn't so good today. I think the bad germs might be, you know, kind of winning, and I need to make some better choices." And, you know, that's the beauty of it, right? It's a conversation, and we let our kids learn through those different choices. And they learn, you know, as they experience the consequences of, you know, their good choices or their bad choices.

And when that happens, we're raising children that, you know, they go to High School, they go away to college, you know, they grew up as adults, and they are thinking about these concepts for themselves. It's not like they leave home and then all the sudden, you know, they go crazy like you said. It's like the forbidden fruit, and all they eat is fast food and candy all the time, right? So it's such a powerful thing to involve them in the process and have those conversations, you know, in all aspects of our life. And that's what I get excited about with buddies being in American households and across the world is it just opens up the door to have conversations as parents with our children.

Katie: Absolutely. And I think that's such an important starting place. And I know that you also have some resources to help parents. I know that we'll, of course, have the book linked in the show notes as well as blog posts relating to a lot of the stuff we talked about. But you have other resources, I believe, to help kids get involved in their health from a young age. So can you share what those are, and I'll make sure they're linked in the show notes?

Sarah: Yeah, you bet. So they're all on our website. And couple examples of those. Well, one is the tear out food chart, you know, that's in the back of the book. We've got the Buddies in My Belly food plate that's super fun. We're actually in the process of making those into actual plates that kids can use at mealtime. We have a really cool chart of "Caring for the buddies." So it has a list of...you know, helps the buddies, hurts the buddies, just divide things up that, you know, go beyond food and our diet choices to lifestyle as well.

Then we've got, you know, the buddies, habits charts. So those are things like our water, and our stress, and our sleep that are really fun ways for us to kind of engage these conversations as a family. We've got the "Buddies In My Belly" e-cookbook, you know, that I mentioned. And then we're developing these buddies episodes that will have, you know, all over the internet, YouTube and social media, on our website that will be just really fun. We also have a buddy's theme song. I would sing it but I'm not a very good vocalist. But it's pretty catchy, and it's fun to hear. You know, kids sing that too.

So it's just that repetition, right? And it's repetition for our children, but it's also repetition for us as adults. And, you know, keeping things simple. You know, I know people who listen, follow you, Katie, you know, we're all passionate about health, but maybe our spouses or, you know, even like family members, they're like, "What in the world are you doing? I don't get it." It's like, "Here, read this book. It'll take you five minutes, and you'll start to understand." So it's fun how we can kind of, you know, branch out and really reach the masses when we make things simple and fun.

Katie: Absolutely. And like I said, for anybody driving, jogging, anything else, everything we talked about will be linked in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm, so you don't have to worry about writing it down or clicking on it while you're driving. Be safe. But I think this is a super helpful book. I definitely recommend it. And I really encourage you guys to check it out and check out the resources. And, Sarah, thank you so much for your time both in your mission in education and also in being here with us today. I think this book is helping a lot of kids, and I'm really excited for what you're doing.

Sarah: Well, thank you so much. It was an honor to be on.

Katie: And thanks to all of you for sharing your time and for listening today. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of "The Wellness Mama Podcast."

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