



Episode 230: How to Protect Your Mindset & Live a
Balanced Life: Chalene Johnson's Story

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. And I'm so excited to be here today with "New York Times" bestselling author of "PUSH," and she's written so many other programs as well, Chalene Johnson, who is a lifestyle and business expert, an amazing speaker and a podcast host. And one of the things I admire the most, she and her husband Bret had been married for over 20 years. And together they founded the SmartLife movement. She has also, with the help of top dietitians, doctors, researchers, and experts recently founded something called, "The 131 Method," which I think we're gonna talk about today. And she hosts two top ranked podcast, "The Chalene Show" and "Build Your Tribe." And "Huffington Post" has recognized her as one of the top 50 female entrepreneurs to watch. Today we're going to delve into several aspects of her own health journey in her life. And I'm hoping that she will share some of her top advice for living a happier and more balanced life. Chalene, welcome, and thanks for being here.

Chalene: Well, Katie, thank you so much. It's an honor. This will be a great conversation.

Katie: I cannot wait to jump in. So I know from talking to your team that you've recently suffered a really pretty severe hamstring injury that is almost always treated with surgery, but that you managed to bounce back naturally. Everybody listening typically has a natural focus and is really interested in alternative or natural therapies. So if you don't mind, could you take us through that story and like, let us know what you did that worked?

Chalene: Oh my gosh, you just became my BFF. I wanna talk about this endlessly, and I'm just like looking for eyes that look interested because I just think it's frigging fascinating. And so thank you for asking that question. Yeah, so I...it's kind of embarrassing because I wasn't like sprinting or doing something really cool. I was roller skating out on a street and I hit some gravel. And I had one leg out in front of me imagine with my toes lifted. So that leg was fully extended, knees almost locked, that leg's out in front. And I hit a rock and I like slammed down into a forward split, which I'm not prepared to do and it tore three of the hamstring muscles off the bone. It was like I'd been shot by a machine gun. Like, I just went down and I knew, oh, like I felt like my leg was detached. It's the strangest feeling and incredibly painful. But I literally felt like when you've torn muscle or pulled a muscle, you can feel it. Like how? Am I paralyzed on one leg? Like, what is this?

Anyways, I had an MRI and suffered a hamstring avulsion where the muscle had torn away from the bone, all three hamstring attachments, from the pelvic bone, and really, because of the size of the tear, and it wasn't like a tear, it was a full detachment. They just said, "Your only option is we make a small incision under the crease of your butt. We go into the glutes, we pull the detached hamstring back up under the bone, we suture it onto the bone and it's gonna take about six months to a year to heal." That's it. Like, that's the only alternative. But I decided like, "Okay. I get it. But maybe I should see a few other doctors." I had an event where I needed to be in front of 20,000 fitness folks doing Piyo, which is a workout I created, and it's a flexibility workout. I knew I had to be in front of people like literally five weeks later. So that was pretty sketchy. And so I wanted to go see another doctor who is an orthopedic surgeon who is just like one of those freakish genius, like doesn't care what modern medicine is saying, like he wants to get to the science. He's just a genius, no other way I can describe him. And you would think an orthopedic surgeon would say, "Okay. We need operate." But he was like, "I've been doing these experimental things. If you're down with it, I would recommend you follow this protocol." And the protocol is some think would really love to do instead of surgery, but none of it's covered, zero. And it was incredibly expensive. But I'm like, "Dude, I'm game. It's my health. I would much rather do this and go under the knife."

And the protocol, if I can generalize or summarize, it was to produce as much stem cell regeneration as possible with the kind of final or the last two options would be to do a stem cell injection, which I didn't end up doing. And then the final plan would be to operate if it didn't reattach. So I did hyperbaric oxygen chamber treatments, to give you the specifics, hyperbaric oxygen chamber treatment in a hard unit. They're soft units and hard units. So it's a hard unit used at most hospitals. I did that five to six days a week. I did cupping and dry needling three times a week. I did physical therapy three times a week. I did infrared sauna five days a week. And then I took a boatload of supplements that were really geared towards muscle generation, stem cell regeneration, and I also did a testosterone and a human growth shot. So it's a lot. It was pretty crazy and experimental, but like, within two weeks, people were tripping. I was already doing squat jumps. It didn't even

make sense to me. I'm like, "I don't understand, like the muscle's not attached, right?" And he said, "Yeah, but the stem cells are...they're forming what appears to or the body believes is that muscle tissue and you're retraining those cells as opposed immobilizing, which is what you'd be doing if you're recuperating from a surgery." It was like crazy. It was the funniest, coolest thing.

Katie: Wow, that is truly incredible. And from what I've read, you actually used similar approach for something with a brain injury. Is that right?

Chalene: Yeah, which is probably why I was pretty open to the idea. It didn't seem radical to me. I had a brain scan in 2015 that what I thought was like just normal brain fog, stuff you're like, "Well, I'm just getting older. I've got kids and my brain is gone." But I had a pretty, I guess you would consider advanced brain degeneration. I had some traumas from previous concussions. You could see that trauma in my head. You could see the areas where I was not getting any blood flow. I did a SPECT scan at the Amen Clinic. He's a doctor who's like most famous for making the radical changes to the helmets in the NFL. And when I saw that scan, I was devastated. The questions they asked me, I was almost offended, like I almost wanted do that like, "Do you know who I am?" They're like, "Are you an intravenous drug user currently or in the past?" I'm like, "No". They're like, "Have you just recently finished a pretty severe bout of chemotherapy?" I'm like, "No." And they are, "Well, the toxicity in your brain and the..." just the appearance of my brain and the lack of blood flow was indicative of someone whose brain was like 20 years older. And so the implications when I was meeting with their team was kind of like, "You must have a very, very unhealthy lifestyle. If you don't have these other things going on, there's nothing else that would cause this other than your lifestyle."

And I guess a part of me realized in that moment, this is probably true. Like, I'm a health professional who has not been very healthy in a true sense. And so I followed the protocol that they prescribed and completely, radically changed my lifestyle, my approach to health, which is part of the catalyst for creating the 131 Method. And then I went back and scanned again. I did a follow up scan at exactly the two year mark. And Katie, I really...I've said this before, and it's just being honest. I don't know if I would have been as motivated or as strong of a believer if I hadn't seen the scan two years later to see like, how remarkably different my brain was like because it's your brain, like, you don't feel that different. I don't look that different. And it's so gradual for so many of us when we're making these health choices, you have to make certain sacrifices and sometimes you have to give up things and do things that are hard that you don't feel like doing. And you wonder sometimes like is this worth it because it's hard to measure health in a really specific measurable way day to day. But eventually, that scan, it's not completely healed, but like my brain, night and day, they're just not even same as Dr. Amen, you know, says, "You aged in reverse." And that was enough for me to go like, "Oh, this stuff is like legit, like the body wants to heal itself," which made me very excited. And I think my attitude about healing my hamstring really helped the process.

Katie: I think that's so true. And what you just said, I think is such a key that is often ignored, which is the body wants to heal itself. It's not that all of these treatments are in of themselves silver bullets. I feel like they either support the body in that natural process or remove obstacles. But I think like that's so important to remember that the body wants to move toward good health and toward healing. And that's the default.

Chalene: It does. And we interfere with it so much. And don't get me wrong. I'm not at all trying to suggest that we shouldn't take advantage of medical advances that save lives every single day. But I think that's our first option is like, "Okay. What pill can I take? And what operation can I have?" As opposed to what does the body wanna do? And why are we interfering with that? Like, the body wants to heal.

Katie: Exactly. So you've mentioned "The 131 Method" a couple of times. Can you explain more what that is and how it works?

Chalene: Sure. So it was part of my journey, if you will, this major health scare. I don't wanna say health scare because it wasn't like it was life or death, but I was looking at what the rest of my life was gonna look like by looking at my brain knowing that I had the genetic markers for Alzheimer's, then coupled with the mistakes I was making in what I thought was a healthy lifestyle. At the time that I had that brain scan, and I had a number one fitness infomercial, I was in the Guinness Book of World Records for having done the most exercise workouts. People given me their trust and they looked to me for diet and lifestyle things that would make them healthier. And what I was doing was really based on what everyone else was doing, what everyone else is saying. And I accepted things as fact without ever going, "I wonder if that's substantiated by a study or are we just saying this, like, and what's the science behind it?"

So it was never that I intended to mislead anyone. It was never that I knowingly was living an unhealthy lifestyle. I just, in that rat race that we can get so easily caught up in and that we need to exercise harder and longer and with greater intensity and not recognizing, like, our bodies weren't meant to exercise for four hours a day and survive on five hours of sleep and an insane amount of stress. And just the amount of stress that like our phones and notifications and social media demands and all of these things, like, we don't realize, like, we were not built for that. Our bodies have not evolved to handle that kind of stress. So you're in this constant state of stress and oxidative stress and the toll that that takes on your body, and then to couple that with eating foods that are just fake.

I would tell people, and I believed it. It wasn't like I was lying. I believed I would, people would say, "What's your diet?" And I'd say, "Oh, it's just a very clean diet. I eat very clean." I defined clean then as, as low calorie and as low fat as possible, no cheats, no treats, no fried food, but certainly sugar free jello, which is all fake, is fine. And Diet Coke is all fine. Like, that's clean in my mind. And as I continued to exercise more, I found that my metabolism was less and less cooperative. Like, I was almost like riding a bike and someone every day is slowly tightening the back break and you don't realize it. So then my workouts had to be longer just to be able to maintain the same weight that I was at. Being on camera, there's so much pressure and these weird conversations that are just horrible, and some day I'll write a book about them. But it's just so freaking unhealthy. Like, "Gosh, if we could just get you down a little bit more in your body fat, Oh, Chalene, it would be so inspirational." You're like, "Shit, I'm not even eating anything right now. I'm exercising four hours a day. How am gonna do that?" And I would just keep trying, like, "Okay, okay, okay, it must be some... It's my genetics. I'll cut back more." And the more I did that was like this vicious cycle where I was developing a

slower metabolism. And it was just my body trying to accommodate whatever it was I was doing. Our bodies wanna be in homeostasis.

And through that process of eating all those fake foods and the stress that I was under, I started having the brain issues, and the brain and the gut connection. As I started to heal my brain, I realized if I'm gonna heal my brain, I have to start with my gut. And that's when I discovered, holy cow, I didn't know what leaky gut was. And I've been suffering from it for years. I had no clue and I was vitamin deficient in almost every essential vitamins and minerals. And I just had to start over and go like, "Okay. Let's...I guess I know nothing really about health. Let's start over and become a student." And I basically just went crazy deep passionate into the science and the study and meeting with experts, and not with people who are trying to sell, books or like sell you something. I just really wanted to know kind of at first just for me. And then as with most things, I'm like, "I have to right this wrong." I mean, a lot of people need to know about this. And it doesn't have to be so hard. And there is a way to live a healthier, happier life and have freedom from food. And actually, we need to redefine health outside of these ridiculously photoshopped images that we see on Instagram that make us feel horrible.

Katie: Yeah. Oh, absolutely. I think that's so key because we...on social media, especially, we only see everyone's best side. But when you see that all day long, you assume that's what everyone actually is like. And as women, especially, I feel like you put so much pressure on yourself to live up to all of those standards. And I hear so much echoes of my own story and your story as well of just pushing myself so hard in college and very little sleep and just eating what was available, terrible food and a ton of stress. And it turns out that's actually the perfect way to create an autoimmune disease. And that was my story and how I got into health. And I feel like you kind of had that same thing. Even though you were in some ways what people would think of as the picture of health because you were in the fitness world already and you are doing so much. So I think that takes a tremendous amount of courage to admit that even when you looked like what many people would think would be Instagram perfect, you still didn't have it all figured out. And you took that step to really look.

Chalene: Absolutely. It was probably the least healthy I've ever been and, but yet still being praised for it. By any means possible, that's kind of how the fitness industry... I don't know if you've ever talked to people who even do fitness competitions. But I can't think of anything less healthy than an individual, and there are exceptions, but for the overwhelming majority of people who are in that state, that state of mind, I mean, it's legalized eating disorders for the most part. I mean, it's just so unhealthy. It's nothing to do with health. Body fat is one moniker, one tiny measure, but I think what worries me the most about what we see in social media is that we assume that person is healthy mentally and physically. And they might not be. The only thing you know is they look lean in that photo or they look muscular, whatever it is, but we really don't know much about what's going on with their health. And so that's what really became the catalyst for me creating. So it took me more than two years to figure out the system for myself and what is the path that you would want to follow and how do people solve their own health problems and in the process, balance their hormones and heal their gut. How do I do that in such a way that it's...it doesn't feel like you're being punished? I've a lot of friends who have done plenty of elimination diets, all the popular ones, which I won't name. But you know the ones like, those are phenomenal. They're so great and they're so helpful and so useful. But they're so unrealistic, like, most of them because you're telling people to eliminate everything, instead of giving them the

understanding of why and how to evaluate what happens if I don't eliminate this. And they're so restrictive. And then what? And then do you live the rest of your life that way? Like, what's the plan?

And so I wanted to develop a program that teaches people how to get healthy from the inside out, balance their hormones, heal their gut health, and in the process, find freedom from these ridiculous diets and food rules, and understand it's like the science of one, and that's really what the 131 Method is. It's three individual dietary phases where we make suggestions, but we deliver the information and the minimum amount of science you need to be able to go, "Okay. Based on this, I understand how I'm gonna make this work for me." So there aren't hard and fast rules. There aren't, "You must do this on this day." And everyone's following this specific number of whatever it is. It's really like you're going through that process of healing yourself from the inside out, but the discovery is so personal. And the results have been astonishing, not just physically, but like for me, the part that gets me really excited are the moms who are like, "Oh, this is gonna save the legacy. My daughter is not gonna have to deal with what I watched. This is gonna change the health of my family."

Katie: I love that. And I absolutely share your passion for that. That was part of my own story as well was having gone through autoimmune disease and seeing just how difficult it is. I didn't want that legacy for my kids. And I think another aspect of life that you, at least from Instagram, seem to have figured out really well, if you don't mind getting a little personal and sharing, is the relationship side. And I think honestly, that is one of the most important pillars of a healthy life in any aspect. And I know that you and your husband had been married for over 20 years. And at least from outside appearances, seem to be still like very close and have an incredible relationship. So if you don't mind sharing a little bit of personal side of what are some of the ways that you guys have found to keep that relationship strong in the midst of businesses and kids and everything else?

Chalene: Yeah. Thank you for asking. No, it is. It's prioritizing it. Bottom line, it's prioritizing it. It's deciding what you want the outcome to be. I think too many people just decide and a lot of times because of what they were role modeled that this is an awful marriage. And as soon as you decide it's an awful marriage, it is. And as soon as you decide parenting is horrible, it is. And as soon as you decide you're gonna fail your diet, you will, like your attitude. It starts there first. And so Bret and I both have had the mindset like we are in this for it to be better every day. And that means doing marriage counseling on a regular basis. That means learning to communicate. That means reading books and listening to podcasts. Like, we spend a lot of time and have. And the more time we spend on it, the better our relationship gets. I mean, our relationship today looks nothing like, I always say, this is our marriage 2.0, what it was like when we first got married. It wasn't like that. And people are like, "Oh, you guys are so lucky." I'm like, "This ain't luck. How dare you. This ain't luck." This is hard freaking work. And it pays off. The harder it is, the greater the payoff. And we work really hard at it. And we've been through some horrible hard times in our lives. But it always makes us better. And we believe, as I know you do, that our number one responsibility is to role model a healthy loving relationship to our children so that that's what they're looking for and that is our responsibility. So we take our marriage, perhaps even more importantly in the scheme of things in our parenting because we think that's like step one of parenting, is to role model that. And frankly, I know that there are gonna be people who will be like, "Well, what are you trying to say? I'm divorced." Listen, I've got best friends who...it just, they weren't good for each other. I understand that. But if you can just early on recognize it's gonna be a struggle and to do your best to prioritize the efforts you make on having a stronger relationship with your spouse, it's just you communicate better and,

you know, there's just a greater likelihood that that marriage is going to stay together and be healthy and happy and fulfilling.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. That's been a core value for us as well is realizing, well, obviously, we adore our children. We love them and they're the most important project we're ever gonna have. That still, our family centers on the marriage and we have to keep that strong in order to be able to raise healthy happy kids or to be able to do anything else in life. At least for us, that's has to be a center focus. And you have two children, I believe, as well and they're older than my, I don't have any teenagers yet, but I think yours are older. Do you have any parenting pearls of wisdom that you can share having made it through at least some of the teenage years?

Chalene: Yeah. I would say you wanna let them fail. I know you believe in that mentality as well. You gotta let them take on risks. You gotta let them know what the consequences will be and talk them through it. But you also have to let them fail. And you have to, also once they fail, you can't fix it for them. You have to talk through possibilities and solutions, but they have... The more a child, even a young child can realize that they can do it, then they don't need the fake recognition and the trophy after every soccer tournament. They begin to have evidence and confidence that is so much more powerful than a gold star that everybody gets. They really tend to believe in themselves. They think of themselves as leaders. They think of themselves as problem solvers. They have confidence in their own opinion and abilities because you've allowed them to fail and fix it. And that's something Bret and I just really strongly believe in. We also put our kids in therapy at a very young age. So they would do that every once in a while just so it wasn't a shock if ever they went through something, which they will and have, traumatic, that they're comfortable with the idea that we go to the dentist because we care about your teeth. And we go to the therapist because we care about your mental health. It's crazy to me that just like the most important thing is your mental wellness. But we just don't prioritize it the way that we should. So we did that from a young age with our children and we also just treated them with great respect, never any name calling. There's just so many things I think that have helped our children to turn out well. But most of all, it is confidence and kindness and self-sufficiency that they've learned through their own experiences.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. I love that. Now, you're my BFF because you said that about letting kids fail. I think that's so important. And of course, we all wish that we could protect our kids from any pain or failure, but truly like in the long term at least as adults if we think back, at least for me, I can say very honestly, that some of my biggest failures became later on the building blocks to tremendous success. But had I not had those lessons of the failures, I would not have had the skills for those later opportunities. And so I think that's such an important key point that you just said. I just wanted to reiterate that. I think it's so hard to watch at times, it's hard. It's hard to let our kids fail and not rescue them, but also it pays off so much when we see how capable they are and the lessons they learn. So I applaud you for having the courage to say that because it certainly is not easy to let your children fail.

Chalene: I think that too often parents are worried about how what their child is doing is gonna reflect on them. And the sooner you can let go of that. And when I say that, I also mean like, you can't also make them into what it is you want them to be. My husband's family's incredibly athletic. They all, like, play professional

sports, and they're all like superstars and insane. And my family's not like that. But they're super competitive. And they just, you know, they all played Division One football, and most of them went on to play professional sports. And so I think our kids had this kind of built in. Even if we didn't say it was kind of this, the idea is that you're gonna play sports, and you better be a phenom. We tried as hard as we could. I mean, you can only do your best as a parent. So much of this I think is DNA too, but we tried so hard not to ever make them feel that. But my daughter, she's a great, gifted athlete. Anything she did, she was really good at it. And then she quit.

And eventually, she found her thing which was track. And she ran it through high school and became an 800 runner, was ranked in the State, was just phenomenal. But that started to become her identity. I sensed that it was getting unhealthy. Like, she was becoming so regimented like, "I need to eat by this time. If I don't eat by this time, I won't have enough time for to digest and I've gotta get in..." Like, just almost I could hear the sense of panic as she was getting older in high school. And she eventually got a scholarship offer from a Division One school, which is insane, like a girl to get offered to run D-one track is insane. But she wasn't happy about it. I could tell. And she wanted a better, an offer from a better school. And I'm like, "Why? Why is that important to you?" Because I could tell it really stressed her out. And she said, "Because it's just I don't think...I just don't think it's important enough. I just don't think people seem that impressed when I tell them." And I said, "I think that's the wrong reason to quit. Who cares what anybody else thinks?"

And then her senior year, she started having like anxiety attacks at track, and panic attacks. And I drove her home from practice one day, and she was kind of hyperventilating and I was explaining to her what she was experiencing and trying to get to what triggered those feelings. And she just is like, "I hate it so much. I hate track so much. I don't wanna do this. I hate it." And I said, "Well, why are you doing it?" And she said, "I don't know what else I am. I'm like, who else am I? It's what everybody knows me for. Everybody asks me about track. It's what I'm known for." I said, "But who cares? If you don't love it, why are you doing it?" So I said, "You're gonna go talk to a therapist and so you don't feel any type of influence from your family. I want you just figure this out and just talk to third..." Because maybe this is just a bad day or a bad week or maybe there's something else going on. I didn't know.

But she came home from her first therapy session like a different child, like she looked so happy and relieved and she said "Ah, I'm quitting track. And I'm never ever gonna run again. I hate it." And I could just tell that she was so happy. I just gave her a big hug. And I'm like, "I'm proud of you. I'm so proud of you. I'm so proud of the fact that you're gonna cost us all this money now because you're turning down scholarship." No, I'm just kidding. But I really was so proud of her that she had the courage at such a young age to recognize that she was chasing something to impress someone other than herself, like she didn't need to prove it to herself. She was trying to prove it to other people and she decided to go to art school instead and she's so happy. You gotta let your kids be who they were meant to be.

Katie: Wow, that is an incredible story. And I'm so glad she found what she loves. And I can only imagine the pressure of being an athlete at that level. That's amazing that she stood up so young and recognized that, because I'm sure like many of us even as adults have gone through periods of our life where we did things because we had to, whether financially or because of expectations from others or to live up to the

expectations of our parents. Even as an adult, I know how hard it is to shake the feeling of that, of just wanting to live up to their expectations. So good for her for recognizing that.

This episode is sponsored by Four Sigmatic, a company whose delicious drink mixes I use daily in some form. I've been fascinated lately by the benefits of medicinal mushrooms like Chaga, which has more antioxidants gram for gram than anything else on the planet, so one serving for instance has the same antioxidants as thirty pounds of carrots. Crazy. Cordyceps is another one, which is great for the immune system, Reishi which helps promote restful sleep, and Lion's Mane which is thought to promote focus and brain health. Four Sigmatic takes these superfood mushrooms and blends them with coffee for a brain boosting jitter free morning drink. They also have a line of delicious elixirs that are caffeine free and great for any time of the day. I almost always end my day with a warm cup of their Reishi, which makes a noticeable difference in my sleep quality and I often begin the morning with a cup of the coffee with Lion's Mane. My kids love their superfood hot cocoa and I love that it contains Reishi which helps promote calm and sleep! You can check out all Four Sigmatic products at foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and save 15% with the code `wellnessmama`.

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Chalene: And also I think like as you said Katie, as adults even sometimes we'll hang on to a goal or a project far past its expiration date because we're like, "But I can't give it up now because I've invested X number of years or X amount of time or there's these people." We lump on top of ourselves all these things we're like, "Well, I don't deserve to give this up even though I hate it because, fill in the blank." But the truth is you can.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And somewhat in the same vein, I would love to get your take on this because I feel like in the past several generations, there have been so many advances that have been favorable to women and us being in business much more and just through all aspects of culture. But the one downside I seem to notice a lot, especially in my readers and listeners is just as we've gotten all of these other things that we can

add to our plate, which are wonderful, nothing ever got taken off of our plate. And I see so many women who are juggling, managing the household, managing the kids, and all their activities and also business or anything they have to do just to keep up with the financial aspects of day to day life. And I hear from so many women who are completely overwhelmed. And it's something I finally have cracked the code on in my own life and something I've started to share more about in hopes of allowing other women to move past that stress and that emotional...just the emotional stress of having all of that on your mind. But I know that you have ran multiple businesses while being a parent and a spouse. So I'd love any tips you could share on just whether it be systems in life or productivity, things that could help take away that stress.

Chalene: Yeah. Thank you for asking. I think, I couldn't agree with you more that that's very true. We've added more and more things to our plate without taking things off. For me, personally, it boils down to knowing what is my overriding priority and then also what is my key priority, or what I like to think of is kind of like a temporary priority in this season. So that can vary based on any life change that you've had. Maybe you've recently gone through a divorce or you've had to file for bankruptcy. If you recently filed for bankruptcy, then your key priority in this season for your life is rebuilding your financial health, even though your family might be you're overriding priority. So I think it's important to know, "Okay What's most important and then what area or key area right now do I need to work on to support that overriding priority and give that my focus." I work in seasons. Bret and I both work in seasons. We have our guiding principles in writing. We call it a priority clarity statement. And it's literally in writing because your ego can convince you, like a little devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other, can convince you like, "Well, I know there's gonna be a great sacrifice. But we're never gonna get this opportunity again or this isn't...this is a once in a lifetime or what if we just go hardcore for six months then we'll make X amount of dollars and then we'll be able to relax." So because I have a tendency to be a workaholic, I need those principles. That is what allows me to make difficult decisions far easier. I work in seasons, so that I know like what is my focus right now with the overriding theory that it has to be related to family. And then I look at whatever my key priority is for that season. And I try to create goals that honor those things, not in any way that could in any way take away or deter from them. It does mean that we've turned down countless opportunities. It does mean that our growth has been smaller. But I couldn't...

I mean, just stand me next to any other parent, and I'm so proud to say like there's gonna be people out there who've got bigger bank accounts and nicer cars and greater notoriety, but you don't have better kids. I promise, you don't have better kids. And that makes me really proud, like that was my goal. They're out of the house now so I can say that. I was nervous when they were still in house because I'm like, "They're gonna screw up. And as soon as I say that, one of them's gonna end up in trouble," you know, whatever it is. But I really believe that those are the right sacrifices for us. And I know not everyone...I've certainly don't mean to suggest that there's a right way or the wrong way. But that we knew what was right for us, and we had to live by it. And that was hard because your ego and your desire to wanna keep up with everybody else can trick you into doing things sometimes where you sacrifice those areas which should, that you've said are your key priority or your overriding priority.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. I think that was something I noticed so much in my own life, because as women, society tells us we should just be able to do it all and manage it all and still like look perfect and have a meal on the table every night. And the truth is, nobody can actually do that every single day. You do have to have

priorities. And for me, it took...literally, I don't talk about this much yet, and I wanna write about it more, but almost getting to the point of a nervous breakdown or panic attack because I was trying to do everything all the time perfectly and realized I can't. This is not at all sustainable. And I took a step back and realized when it comes to business and managing that, like my mission in that is so important to me, and I run everything with systems and they work and I'm not stressed about that, the business runs itself. And again, I feel like I'm juggling plates when it comes to my personal life. And then I realized, "Well, in business, I have systems and goals and objectives and things written down that I'm focused on." And in my personal life, I was trying to manage it all in my head and just keep track of everything. And when I started thinking of my personal life like a business and just made systems, goals, priorities, and measurables, it totally revolutionized my life because I think that, like you said, that focus on priority and having a clear destination, it allows you to say no to the things that don't line up with that.

Chalene: Yeah. Yeah. We did that too and sometimes it's very private because I don't know that people really understand the motivation behind some of our personal policies, like simple things, like, I can't do it all, and a lot of that has to do with time. Like, that's what makes us feel so stressed, is there's none of time to do all these things. Of course, you could enjoy spending time with friends, and you can enjoy going to a baby shower, and you can enjoy doing a lot of these things. But they take time away from your own priorities. And so we early on, Bret and I established personal and family policies that we didn't always make public, but we knew that they were guiding our decisions. And it made things like really clear for us, like, for example, I don't go to baby showers or weddings or these four hour events that I would love to. I wanna use those four hours to like feel like my family's taken care of. And of course, I mean, like there's exceptions, like if it's a best friend. But otherwise, I'm gonna send a lovely gift. And we don't go to parties.

And here's one that a lot of people may not understand, but I'll just tell you. I do everything I can not to make new friends because I'm one of those people that I collect people. And if I start talking too long to the kid who's loading up my groceries at the grocery store, I'm gonna figure out like what he's struggling with and I'm gonna take on his problems and the next thing you know I'm using my energy, my resources, my money, my emotion to help him where that should be given to my family. I've got a huge circle of friends. It doesn't need to get bigger. It needs to get deeper. I don't need to step up and network with people who can lift my career or introduce me to someone special. I need to spend time with the people in my life who are already there for a reason. God put them in my life for a reason. I just don't feel right about, especially knowing my own personality, that I'm gonna be sucked in to those kinds of individuals, and there's so much I can do to deepen my relationship with my existing friends and my existing family. And I don't need to spend enough time with my family. So I need to not put myself in situations where I'm gonna spread myself even further. And that's just a personal decision for me.

Katie: Yeah. I love that. That's definitely counterintuitive I think for a lot of people. But it's making those hard choices that really make, I feel, like the biggest impact on your life. Like you said, they're gonna be different for everybody. That may not be everybody's solution, but it's important to step back and actually evaluate things objectively like that. And I cannot believe we've already almost gone through an hour and gotten close to the end of our time. But I would love to ask a couple more questions that I always ask at the end. One of which, are there any books that have been especially life changing for you or you've read recently that really have made a difference for you?

Chalene: Well, I'll be honest and tell you that I'm an audible listener so I really love, that's how I start my morning each day. I need that time where I'm not on social, my phone's on airplane mode, and I select whatever it is I'm gonna listen to the night before. So I usually pick something on Audible. I find myself listening to some of the same books over and over and over again, anything by John Maxwell. Anything and everything by John Maxwell, I listen on repeat. Also Brian Tracy. The greatest impact on my life was made by a book that's a very fast read called "Eat That Frog." And it's just really kind of helped me to understand at a place in my life where I really didn't understand how to prioritize things. I didn't understand how to get the right things done in the right order. I knew how to be busy, that's for sure. I knew how to be productive, but I didn't know how to have the type of productivity that moved me forward and made me feel like, "Okay, I did what I was supposed to do today." That book had a profound effect on me.

And I would have to say that when it came to parenting, Bret and I read a book called "Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters." That really helped our parenting and so did a book by, I think his name is Sal Severe, and the book was "How to Behave so Your Children Will Too." Another book I think that's really helped our marriage a lot is, shoot, I'm gonna forget the name of it. It's something about emotional intelligence. I'll text it to you when we're done in case you wanna put in the show notes. But understanding the difference between emotional intimacy and physical intimacy and the difference and what a tremendous difference it can make in your connection to your partner, and anyone really, if you understand that emotional connection, is pretty profound.

Katie: Wow, I love all of those. Some of those are new to me. So I can't wait to read them. If there was a piece of advice that you could spread far and wide and give to everyone, what would it be and why?

Chalene: It would be to show yourself grace, to be kinder and to recognize that just the smallest bit of forward progress is huge. In fact, if you sprint, you'll probably run out of breath and run out of steam and be left with your...bent over with your hands on your thighs, breathing hard. Just make slow steady progress. That would be number one. Number two, I have to give you a bunch of them. Unfollow everyone on Instagram and Facebook who when you look at their stuff, you just don't feel as good about your life. Just unfollow them and stop telling yourself that they're inspirational or, you know, for whatever reason you're looking at it, if it just in the back of your mind you admit that it gives you this little twinge of like, "I'm not enough," unfollow them. You've gotta protect your mindset and what you're feeding your brain has so much to do with that. Don't open up social media first thing in the morning. Don't open up the Explore page. Go into your DMs and actually talk to people. Listen but don't spend so much time looking and observing. I think social media is...it's a wonderful thing, it's an amazing thing, like, you know, podcast is also considered social media, but I think there's a healthy way to use it and a very destructive, devastating way to use social media. So protect what it is you're feeding your brain by listening to podcasts like yours, Katie, that just...they uplift you and they give you great ideas and they inspire you to be a better person. But just progress like 1% per week. If you're just like 1% better every week, think about it. Like, in two years time, you're like 100% better than you once were. That's incredible. And it's not gonna wipe you out to do it. Slow and steady progress.

Katie: Wow. No, I love all of that. I think that social media thing is especially important too, because it's largely replaced, for a lot of us, actual community. And if the only interaction that feels that community is on social media and it's making you feel worse about yourself, it's got a negative net effect for you. And so I think like for me, at least prioritizing in like, in person relationships with those few people has made a tremendous difference versus follow everybody on social media and trying to live up to those standards. So I love that you brought that up.

Chalene: Yeah.

Katie: Awesome. And Chalene, if people wanna stay in touch with you and keep learning from you, I know that you are a prolific reader of amazing content, where would you recommend that they jump in and stay in touch with you?

Chalene: Well, I would love it if they subscribe to the "Chalene Show" because I know we podcast listeners have a lot in common. And one of the main things I think podcast listeners, especially to people who listen to a show like yours, is we like growth, we get it, like we wanna grow. We wanna be better. Like, there's, people aren't listening to your show unless they wanna be better. And so I love connecting with people who are of that mindset. I don't understand these people who don't have room for growth or don't see it. That would be my number one ask, I think, is that people stop by the "Chalene Show" and look up a couple of episodes. And then if you wanna hit me up on Instagram, just send me a direct message and let me know maybe what episode you enjoyed. That'd be great. I'm Chalene Johnson on Instagram as well.

Katie: I'll make sure those are linked to the show notes at wellnessmama.fm and I'll even link to a couple of my favorite podcasts that you've done so people can have a starting point.

Chalene: Oh, thanks.

Katie: Chalene, I know you're so busy and you are truly an inspiration. I really appreciate you taking time to be here today and to share your wisdom in the health world and also your personal wisdom, which I think is equally important. So thank you so much.

Chalene: It has been my pleasure. I really respect what you do and your mindset and the way you're raising your kids. It's really inspirational. So thanks for sharing it with the world.

Katie: Oh, thank you. And thanks to all of you for listening and for sharing with both of us your most valuable asset and your time. We don't take that lightly and I hope you will join me on the next episode of the Wellness Mama Podcast.

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