



Episode 271: How to Calm Your Hormones  
and Stop Being Hangry With Sarah Fragoso

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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This episode is brought to you by Alitura Naturals skincare. You guys loved the founder, Andy, when he came on this podcast to talk about his own skin healing journey after a tragic accident that caused massive scarring on his face. From this experience he developed some of the most potent and effective natural skin care options from serums to masks and the results are visible in his perfectly clear skin that is free of scars! I love the mask and use it a couple times a week, and often use the gold serum at night to nourish my skin while I sleep. All of their products have super clean ingredients and they really work! Andy is absolutely dedicated to creating the highest quality products possible and it shows. Check them out at [alitanaturals.com/wellnessmama](http://alitanaturals.com/wellnessmama) and use the Discount code "wellness" to get 20% off.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from [wellnessmama.com](http://wellnessmama.com). And I'm here today with someone who's been a friend for a long time. Sarah Frago is an international best-selling author of five books and founder of the Everyday Paleo brand. She is one of the first people I connected with when I started blogging years ago, and I used to actually guest write on her blog, so we've been friends for a long time. She has over a decade of experience as a certified strength and conditioning coach, is co-owner of JS Strength and Conditioning in Chico, California, and holds a degree in psychology as well as certifications in mindfulness, which we're going to talk about today. And she helps women all around the world with her thriving online platforms and her seminars and retreats. Her latest book is called "Hangry," it's co-authored with Dr. Brooke and is scheduled...or is released actually, by the time you're listening to this, you can get it anywhere books are sold, and I definitely recommend it. Sarah, welcome and thanks for being here.

Sarah: Oh, thank you so much, Katie. I feel like this is so long overdue for us to connect on this platform anyway. So I'm just excited to be here with you, thank you.

Katie: Oh, of course, I can't wait to share our conversation with everyone listening. And I think you are such a wealth of knowledge and also of just great perspective. So, Sarah, when it comes to health and diet, and especially weight loss, speaking from personal experience, I feel like, throughout the years, I've tried, you know, so many different approaches and it can be so frustrating, especially for those of us who are married

and have a husband who can like lift weights twice and see noticeable results. And it's so tough as a woman to find the approach to diet and exercise that really works. And I also feel like, at the end of the day, my friends might find something that works and it's not gonna work for me and vice versa. So why do you think there is no like one-size-fits-all thing when it comes to women and health?

Sarah: Well, because for a myriad of reasons but mainly we're all so unique when it comes to our health issues, and especially our hormones, and we are so fluid. If you think about how a woman's body is, right, our hormones behave differently when we're a teenager, and then, we have a baby and of course our hormones behave differently pre- and post-baby. And then, we start to age, we hit 35 and our estrogen naturally starts to wane. And then, we become, you know, perimenopausal, and then, we go through menopause. And then, on top of that, as women, especially nurturers, type-A, people like you and I who are really driven, most of the women that we know today, right, it's like we all hold a career, and we raise children, and, you know, we're breadwinners and we're entrepreneurs, and also, we do all the kids' stuff. And I'm not minimizing men's experience but I'm talking about how this impacts our hormones directly, and we dump a bunch of stress on, and we end up with thyroid issues or autoimmune disease. And of course what works for our best girlfriend, wherever she is with her hormones in her phase of life or wherever she is with her health, is going to totally be different than what it might look like for you.

So I think, you know, for women trying to find that one-size-fits-all plan, it just breeds frustration in a sense of, "I'm not doing it right," when really what we need to start to do is tune in to our bodies and what our hormones are telling us, and then respond according to those cues which is really hard to do. It's not...I can just say that, but it doesn't mean everyone listening is like, "Oh, got it. Okay, that's what I'll do."

Katie: Yeah, exactly. So what are some of those ways that we can start identifying our own things that are gonna be our needle movers?

Sarah: Well, we talk about this a lot in the book but we have some really simple acronyms to start paying attention to, and I think my favorite one is ACES, and that's appetite, cravings, energy, and sleep. So every time we do any sort of exercise or any sort of input, right, like we give our body this input, there's going to be a response. And there should never really be like the super exaggerated response to what we do. Right? So if we're exercising too much and we notice that our appetite's out of control, we're craving all the things, our sleep is erratic, our energy is tapped, that's probably not the right exercise for you.

Same with your diet. Right? If you're like, "Oh, intermittent fasting, that's what I should do," and you shorten your eating window, so you're going 16 hours without eating and maybe you have some underlying HPA axis dysfunction or thyroid condition. And suddenly, you're like, "Oh my gosh, I'm hangry, I'm a mess. Again, my sleep is all over the place, my blood sugar is up and down, and, you know, I don't have the energy to get out of bed in the morning," obviously that diet is not right for you.

So starting to tune in to what the response is when...you know, usually, like I know myself personally, I am the queen of powering through. Right? Like, "Okay, I got this. I'm just going to use some fake energy to make myself feel better, I'm gonna go beat myself up in the gym to get that adrenaline pump and that's gonna give

me that little boost. And then, I'm gonna reach for the caffeine. And then, I can't wind down at night so I'm gonna drink three glasses of wine so I can try and get to sleep." So we kind of self-medicate in some ways to get through all that, and then we wonder why our diet and our exercise plan isn't working. You know, "Why am I so inflamed?" Or maybe it worked for a minute because it shifted our metabolism a bit or boosted it a bit, "I mixed things up but then now I've plateaued again." Or, "What the heck? Now I'm gaining weight." So really starting to listen to those ACES is one great way to tune in.

Katie: I love that acronym, that's super helpful. And I think those are great examples of maybe...like obviously there's no one-size-fits-all approach but it seems like those are, you know, universally good things to look at. Are there other things that almost always seem to be beneficial for people across the board, especially for women?

Sarah: Yeah, I think also, in my opinion, letting go of looking at like the next best diet or next best exercise plan and really starting to be more centered and present in just how things are right now and sort of starting to lean into like radical acceptance of where you are right now. In my opinion, mindset and mindfulness practice is bigger and more important than trying to, you know, chase that next thing. Right? "Well, how can I change this," and "How can I reach this goal," instead of just being where you are right at this moment and really leaning into that.

And that's the hard work, that's where like the really tough scary stuff comes in. And that's the work I do with my 101 clients where, you know, I'll get an email, "Hey, will you work with me virtually? I need to lose 20 pounds," and my response always is, I cannot guarantee you that your body's gonna look any different 6 weeks from now but what I can guarantee you is that if you start to be in radical acceptance of where you are right now, and loving yourself, and nourishing yourself through the process of trying to find what works for you when it comes to diet and exercise, that's the only way that your body is going to be able to relax and feel safe enough to start to believe that, "Okay, maybe I can make aesthetic of changes." But there's no guarantee of that, right? Especially in our stress-filled world that we live in.

And of course I work with women who make incredible aesthetic changes all the time, but I haven't seen it be sustainable unless it comes from this place of nourishment, and love, and perspective of, "This is where I am, and I need to honor that."

Katie: Yeah, I think that's so important and also probably one of the toughest things for women to actually do. I have this line from you, "You don't need to change your body, just your perspective." And the thing I've realized, and it's been kind of my own journey in the last year, is realizing...like I had this story in my head for so long after having six kids, you know, like, "Oh, if I only just got back to the size I was pre-kids," or "If I only just got rid of these stretch marks," or "If I only just did this, and this, and this, then I would be happy." And I have had to realize, "Or I can just choose actually to be happy right now and to love my body where it is right now," and still work on those things, because they're not objectively bad to work on the things but I could just actually start being happy and not wait for that. So let's go a little bit deeper on this radical acceptance, and how do we start moving into that mindset when I feel like the culture is telling us that, you know, it's never enough, or never perfect enough, or never pretty enough, and like we're just so conditioned that way.

Sarah: Oh, absolutely. Well, I don't think women have ever been given permission to be okay with where they are right now. Because that's not the message. I mean you said it perfectly, right, we are conditioned to think that we need to constantly be working on our bodies, where we don't get that message or that constant reminder that we're absolutely okay where we are right now. And I think women tend to forget too that we are so individual, right? I mean at my leanest most shredded, I felt horrible, like I was in a really bad place. You know, I had horrendous adrenal fatigue, my cortisol was all over the place, my thyroid was tanking, I was overdoing it, I was miserable, my relationship was a mess. Like it was, you know, a myriad of things.

And I'm not at all alluding to people who look fit and in shape or unhealthy, like that's not at all what I'm saying because I've also been fit and in shape and my perspective's been good and I felt really good. So, you know, it goes both ways, it's not at all an assumption that that's everybody that you see that looks like they're in this fantastic, you know, physical shape that they feel bad. But the point is is that I wasn't even able to enjoy my body when I was in the best shape that I was ever in because I was not ever outside of my head. I was always in my head, second-guessing everything. I would look in the mirror and I wouldn't see someone who is in peak physical condition. I saw someone who was unfulfilled, who lacked any sort of joy, my perspective was all out of whack. And like I said, my relationship was a mess, I wasn't tuned into anything that gave me joy. All I was doing was chasing the next best thing instead of just being incredibly grateful for what I had in that moment.

So going to gratitude I think is one of the biggest ways for all of us to start to settle in to just being okay with where we are right now. And that sounds super easy and it's kind of cliché but it honestly is the hardest work, besides the perspective shift, it's part of that perspective shifting, it's really hard work that you have to do in order to be like, "Okay, how am I supposed to be grateful for my messed up hormones, my jeans that don't fit, you know, my financial problems?" So it's about really looking inward and deciding that you want what you have right now more than what you wish you had. And I guarantee you that, no matter what situation you're in, if you start to look at that, just that glimmer of, "Okay, there is a lot that I have right now that I am so incredibly grateful for that it can bring me to tears," that's just one little tool that will start to help you just be more in your body versus in your head and start to have that perspective shift. But I mean there's so much more work than that that goes into it.

I know for me meditation with intention has been super dramatic in my own perspective shift. And, in my opinion, there's meditation where we sit down, and we sit still for a few minutes as, you know, any other habit that we start to cultivate, and I think it is helpful. But for me, meditation with intention where I'm really deciding to look inward and to let whatever comes up come up and come through me, and to really let my feelings be okay, and honor them, and not try to distract from them is so much more powerful than just sitting there and, you know, breathing for a few minutes. So meditation with intention, gratitude, finding something that brings you joy...like what can you do today that is completely outside of diet and exercise and taking care of everybody? Like what can you do today that just is something that fulfills you? Maybe it's taking a walk outside, or planting flower, you know, in your flowerbed, or, you know, maybe it's playing the piano for 10 minutes. Or for me, it's silly stuff like just being with my kids, and cranking the music in the kitchen, and letting myself dance and be goofy and hearing them laugh at me. You know, just something that pulls you outside of all the things that we worry about constantly.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. I think like gratitude is such an amazing place to start for any mental shift, and any movement towards mindfulness. And that was one of those things I've had to learn the hard way as well, just, like you said in the beginning, very driven type-A, always just doing and going and running. And making the time to have that quiet and to have those moments of gratitude and mindfulness and... And what's been really interesting too is that I used to discount like that that was actually gonna be a needle mover when it came to health. And now that I track my data so closely, I have seen really drastic changes and things that are huge metrics of health, like heart-rate variability, from implementing that really consistently. So when I first started tracking my heart-rate variability was like in the 40s and 50s, and now, it's consistently over 100. And like my exercises stayed pretty similar, my diet stayed pretty similar, and I just got better at the mindset side. So I think like that was really a huge wake-up call for me of like we can, you know, check all the boxes we're trying to like do all these things for diet and exercise, but the mental side is so, so, so important.

Sarah: Oh yeah. At this point in my career and in my own personal life, I feel like it's the most important thing. And, you know, I've noticed with myself that, you know, I can't let that part slide. Right? Like, as soon as I let go of my spiritual practice, my mindset practice...and, you know, it doesn't mean that I am, you know, some mindfulness guru sitting on top of the mountaintop in lotus position all the time, like that's not realistic. But a good friend of mine, she's kind of like my accountability person when it comes to this stuff, when we check in with each other, and we call it our spiritual ID. Like I need like that constant reminder that it's bigger than just me. Right? Like what we're experiencing right now is so much greater than my concern about am I ever gonna get that 250-pound deadlift, or am I ever going to fit into my skinny jeans again? Or even with my own health, like I've done enough to myself that I know...like this whole optimal-health buzz that's out there in our world, even in the paleo sphere of how to achieve optimal health. Well, that sets us up for failure too. Right? Like, how am I ever gonna do that? Because I am driven, I am going to probably have to sacrifice a little bit of my health to keep being Sarah Fragoso. But if I stress out about that and let that rule me and feel guilt that I can't achieve optimal health where I can't work out as hard as I used to because I've tanked my thyroid and I have to be really careful about my diet. And all of that breeds like this sense of, "Oh, poor me," and "This isn't fair." But for me, shifting that to, "I'm so grateful I know this about myself and I'm so glad that I can, you know, make these subtle tweaks to my diet and my exercise when I tell that I'm overdoing it, and so I can start to feel better, and, you know, I'm so grateful that I can just be right here in this moment, knowing that tomorrow I don't have any clue what's going to happen so I better enjoy what's going on right in front of my face right now because this is all I have."

And it really does move that needle when it comes to health. Because I've noticed with myself too, like I was alluding to, I can get a little more loose like with my food. I don't do that intentionally, but if there's like a weekend where I'm like, "Okay, well, we celebrated, I maybe ate something I don't normally eat before, it would wreck my digestion, it would take me days to recover," now that I'm more in my body and more focused on stress management, that doesn't tend to happen as often. But I totally notice when I let that go and there's a big acute event or stress overwhelms me, it affects everything so much more drastically. So yeah, I'm right there with you, girl, it's such a huge important part of health overall.

Katie: And I think it's related, and you talk about this in the book, but I feel like, especially the people listening, largely like they're super educated, super smart, like I'm always so impressed by the listeners and just their level of knowledge, and... I mean I like read studies all day long and I know exactly what you're "supposed to do" and it's still sometimes so hard to actually do those things. And I'm guessing this like mindset and

overwhelmed component is a huge factor here. But what do you think the reason that women really struggle to stay consistent with, whether it's food or exercise, even if they know what works?

Sarah: Oh my gosh. Well, for so many reasons, and it also goes back to the whole mindset perspective. Right? So that's a big part of the book, right? Our first pillar is find, and then commit to what works for you. And I know that some women have found what works for them, and they're like, "Okay, this is actually really groovy." Right? Like my exercise is good, my food is good, and then, you know, all of a sudden, a month goes by and they find themselves in the bottom of a tub of Ben & Jerry's. Right? And they're like, "What is going on? Like, what just happened to me?"

And I think we kind of live in a trance most of the time where we go on autopilot, where that just tends to be the next thing. Right? Like it's our habit where we fall off. "Okay, I can do this for a while..." Because again, it's programming. We have all these 30-day challenges where everything that we do is just for a minute, it's not forever, it's not for life. So I think we put a lot of pressure on ourselves too. Right? Like, if I don't do this perfectly, then I shouldn't do it at all. And we forget that there is this like kind of happy in-between place where you can live, where, you know, depending on your health and your hormones, there's food that works for you all the time, there's food that, you know, is worth it food, where, okay, I can get away with that every now and then but I'm cued in enough to my hormones, I'm in my body, and present enough to know when too much is too much or how often I can get away with that because I'm listening to my ACES.

And then, there's like the stuff that's never worth it, like the exercise and the food that's never ever worth it. And until you do the mindset, and mindfulness practice, and the perspective shifting, and you really stay in tune, and you're able to bring yourself back into the present, we get into this trance where it's just this automatic response of like, okay, I'm distracting from my pain and this is how I do it, or I'm distracting from my reality, that this isn't a food that works for me and I'm feeling bad about it, and, yes, it's gonna produce guilt and shame but, in that moment, it makes me feel better. So having those tools to be able to instead sit with yourself in those moments of, okay, I figured out what works for me. Now here I am, at the end of this 30 days, or this 4-week plan, or whatever it is. Am I going to make a conscious choice to continue to commit to that with all these tools that I've cultivated, with my mindset and mindfulness practice, or am I gonna continue living in this trance where my story is that I can't stick to anything that works for me?

So again, going back to the gratitude button, right? Like, "I am so thankful I know what works for me and I know what it feels like to feel good." I coach women all the time to like, it's simple, stop, take a deep breath when you start to notice yourself being in that trance of going on autopilot and just reaching for whatever it might be that, you know, isn't going to work for you, and make you feel awful, and wreck your hormones. It's not about restriction. It's about, okay, take that deep breath, tap into your parasympathetic, let everything calm down, get out of your head and into your body, and visualize how is it that you want to feel. What do you want to do you tomorrow? Right? Is tomorrow important to you? Is it important to you in 5 minutes to feel better? Is it, for you, a conscious choice that, yeah, I'm going to do this thing that might not be the best for me but I'm not gonna let myself beat myself up over it. I'm just gonna go on and the next thing I do will be the next best thing for myself.

So even if women decide to do something that doesn't necessarily work for them in that moment, it's at least a conscious decision rather than being in this trance. So I think, you know, if women start to, again go back to really being in their bodies and out of their heads, it helps them stay committed versus to this conditioning of, "I do a diet and it fails. I do a diet for 30 days, I feel better, I find what works for me, but I don't stick to it. That's my story, that's how it works for me, and I mask my pain with my distractions." Right? We all have our own stuff, for some of us it's food, for some of us it's online shopping, for some of us it's intense exercise that really isn't good for our hormones. We all distract. Right? So, in "Hangry," we coach women to instead what we call put your toe in the hot water and really start to feel your emotions and let them be okay, and tune into what we call your best-friend voice versus that self-critic that we all have. And when we really start to tune in and pay attention, she's there a lot more often than our best-friend voice. So learning to distinguish between those two voices. So, you know, we give you so many tools and resources in "Hangry" to do our first pillar, which is commit to what works for you once you find it. Because, you know, my hope is that women everywhere can just feel a little bit more at peace in their own bodies and feel connected and trust instead of consistently pushing back and resisting.

Katie: Yeah. Oh my gosh, yeah. And also, I'm glad you brought up exercise because I think this is another topic where there's a lot of misinformation. And you were actually one of my really like earliest influences in shifting my perspective on exercise. Because I played soccer in high school, and so, in my head, it was like cardio equals exercise. And especially like after having kids, I feel like I was draining my body trying to run or trying to do really intense cardio. And I had always been like kind of scared of strength training and weight training because I didn't wanna get bulky which is like perception that goes around like, you know, you put on too much muscle. And you've written about that a lot, and I know you mention it in the book too about the importance of strength training, but let's talk about that. Because I felt so much better when I personally made that shift to lifting weights and getting strong and just shifting my mindset to being strong or being capable instead of, you know, just only cardio. And not that there's anything wrong with cardio, although I think you can go too far, but let's talk about the exercise side, and especially the importance of strength training and what that does for us as women.

Sarah: Oh, absolutely. And, you know, I am such a proponent of strength training. And I totally get that it's scary. I also understand that, for some women, it's their only stress reduction so it goes both ways. Right? Like most women I work with, they're either totally overdoing it in the gym with weights actually, not just cardio but with weights, and doing, you know, more of like a circuit-training style program or a CrossFit program or HIIT, high-intensity interval training, where all they're doing is, you know, moving quickly, throwing weights around, and not necessarily paying attention to technique, or form, or core strength, and aggravating probably already a tired thyroid or someone who has the cortisol issues. So with strength training, however, the importance of it is that it actually does hormonally give women a really positive response if done correctly. Right? So what we're after when it comes to strength training is that positive hormonal response. Human growth hormone is like the elixir of life. Right? It's like the longevity hormone which we all want more of. We want to, you know, increase muscle mass. Of course that lean muscle mass is what actually burns fat. It's not the calories that you see on the treadmill, like, okay, I burned 30 calories. Like what does that even mean? So what actually help us shed body fat is building muscle. And there's that wonderful effect that happens after you leave the gym where you continue to actually burn body fat. And I kind of hate that term but it truly is what happens, like, you know, we lift weights, we stress that muscle, and then we have to, you know, give all of this energy to those cells to grow those muscles, and then hence we're then burning body fat. So we can do less work and not stress our hormones out and actually get the results that were after if done properly.

So, you know, in the book, we have three different strength-training templates where we want women to...we help women figure out where to start. And so often too, women have, you know, really, unfortunately, weak cores and pelvic floors, not just from giving birth but also just from the, you know, daily life, like sitting too much and not exercising correctly and going into a weight-lifting program where they're not focusing on position, or pelvic position, or rib position, or proper breathing and bracing. And then, we end up with pelvic-floor dysfunction or a super weak core. So we start women who need to, you know, really address those issues, and then we have kind of like a baseline strength-training workout for women who have been doing too much, to kind of bring them back down and reset their hormones. And then we have an actual strength-training template that is customizable for women who have hormone issues. So, you know, if you, for example, have the more delicate hormonal issues like low thyroid or low cortisol, then there's not gonna be a lot of metabolic conditioning but, you know, most women are told, who are in that camp, not to do any exercise. And that's also not accurate because, like I said earlier, we need that input, we need that stimulus of lifting weights but done correctly based on your unique hormone profile.

And what we have found, in my experience, especially just in the gym with women is, not only do you become more empowered physically, but also emotionally when you start to strength train and you do it in a way that your hormones in your body really respond well to. It's like you said, right? Like you feel so much better. I mean I know so many women who have found themselves so empowered emotionally by finding their own strength and a workout program that works for them that it's made drastic changes in the other aspects of their life. And, you know, working out should be nourishing, it should not be a punishment. And we view it that way, right? Like if it's not killing me, then it's not the right thing. And we're fed all of that through shows like "The Biggest Loser," right? Like that line from that one trainer, I won't even say her name, you know, "If you don't," what is it, "bleed, puke, or cry, then you're not doing it right." Like that's the message we get. But no, strength training should be about nourishing your body, nourishing your hormones. Yes, it should be hard, we are intended to do hard work, but not in a way that wrecks us. So I love that you brought up the whole getting bulky thing, if you don't mind if I address that real quick.

Katie: Absolutely. I think, yeah, it's a huge misconception. So definitely, let's go deep on that.

Sarah: Oh my gosh, huge misconception. So, you know, again, we see people out in the fitness industry and out in the world, and like, you know, fitness models, those women have to do so much work to achieve that kind of physique. And I am always in awe of them. I'm like, "Oh my gosh, this is your job." Right? The amount of hours they spend, the meticulous dieting that they have to do, and also genetics plays into it as well. Right? So I know for me I've been, you know, strength training for 11-plus years now, and then I've always been an athlete and did gymnastics as a kid. Genetically, I am not predisposed to put on massive amounts of muscle. The strongest that I've ever been, I just can't...it just doesn't happen for me. And that's very typical for most women where it does actually take like a super stringent meticulous plan to look like you're going to be on stage in a bodybuilding competition. Not that there's anything wrong with that, like I said, I'm in awe of those women who choose to do that as their career. It's so much stinkin' work that I would never wanna do.

And then, the other side of that coin is what women often see if they're like, "Oh my gosh, I lifted weights and I gained more weight," is they're looking at the scale versus paying attention to what their body composition is actually doing. So, often, you know, we get women in the gym, they start a strength-training program, or they're working one-on-one with me virtually, or Brooke and I in one of our online programs, and they're like,

"What's going on? I'm getting bulky." And what is happening is, initially, women will start to lay down some muscle but not necessarily be in a place yet hormonally, or have tightened up their diet enough, or maybe still working on like getting their sleep in check, where they haven't also started to change as far as like shedding some body fat is concerned. And in their brain, they're thinking, "Oh my gosh, this is me putting on weight or getting bulky."

But getting that lean muscle mass is so important to actually achieving that next step, if that's your goal, if that's what you choose to do, of losing some body fat. So it also, again, depending on your hormones, if you have insulin resistance, or PCOS. Women with insulin resistance, they do tend to be able to put muscle on a little bit easier, but they also tend to be able to gain weight a little bit easier. But putting on lean muscle mass is so key to being healthy overall, but again, it goes back to changing your perspective of what your body is doing and putting some trust and faith into the process. If your ACES are in check, if you're not overtraining, if your sleep is good, you know, if you're not having insane cravings, then you are on the right track and you will start to see that shift and all of your health markers are going to improve. So it's just taking that step of knowing you're doing it right and having the correct guidance.

And there's a lot of really great trainers out there, and like I said, you know, we've laid the whole program out in our book. You know, you just wanna find someone, if you're gonna work one-on-one with somebody in the gym, who will listen to you, and understand, and not just give you a one-size-fits-all program. Somebody who's really in tune with, okay, this woman, for example me, she's in her 40s, she's had three children, you know, she's probably approaching perimenopause, she's had some hormone issues in the past. I probably shouldn't make her do 45 minutes of metabolic conditioning. So, you know, finding someone who's really gonna clue into that or, you know, listening to Katie, listening to me. There's so many women out there now with this better perspective on lifting weights than there ever used to be, thank goodness.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely, and I love that you tackled that misconception because I think it's a huge one. And I'm curious if there are any other areas that, you know, things people don't know or fully understand about what you write about and talk about. And if so, like kind of let's debunk some more of this thing, because I love tackling this kind of things, especially for women. So are there other things that people don't really know or understand what you talk about?

Sarah: Yeah. I think I've covered a couple of them already but I think one that's kind of big, going back to nutrition...and this was a huge eye-opener for me because, you know, you and I have been in this kind of paleo sphere since the very beginning and, you know, when you were contributing to the blog, and I just jumped in head first into this whole paleo diet thing. Because it really did change my life, like I'm not at all minimizing the impact that the paleo diet had on me. It's why I have the career that I have right now. I mean I was in bad shape, not just physically but, you know, psychologically, all of it. It really helped, it was like the catalyst for me being where I am now. But I totally drank the Kool-Aid, right? Like I was CrossFitting like crazy, I was eating a very strict paleo diet, and it was really heavy on the animal fat. Right? Like I probably ate bacon and eggs for breakfast for like 6 years straight. There wasn't a whole lot of variance there. And of course I was eating vegetables, I've always been a big veggie pusher, like I've never minimized the importance of vegetables. Because I know, just in my own experimentation, I always felt better when I ate a lot of vegetables. But I definitely was like cooking in bacon grease, cooking in beef tallow, eating, you know, lots of

red meat, lots of bacon. I keep going back to bacon. But I was using lots of bacon, lots of sausage, going to like this super easy, you know, grab the Applegate Farms' salami and, you know, having that for lunch.

And so, I got to this place a few years ago where my hormones were just a total mess. And so, I did some testing and realized that I wasn't detoxing estrogen. And I was like, oh my god. Okay, first of all, I lost my mom to breast cancer, so this is really stinking scary. And this was around the time I started working with Dr. Brooke who was my co-author with "Hangry," and she's like, "Yeah, you need to back off on the animal fat." And I'm like, "You're crazy. I've been preaching for years that animal fat is healthy." And it is, it's not inherently bad, but doing my own research, and then shifting how I ate just slightly, which meant I still eat meat, I still eat plenty of protein, protein is super important, but I've backed way off on the animal fat and it completely helped turn around that inability that I was having to detox excess estrogen. And I'm sure it also had to do not just with the animal fat, which is...in that animal fat is what is called persistent organic pollutants, or POPs, which is... You know, we all store our hormones in our fat, animals do as well, and there's a lot of unfortunate organic pollutants out in our world. Even with animals that are grass-fed and pasture-raised, our water sources aren't all that great. There's a lot of, you know, unfortunate pollutants that float in the air, down on to the grass the animals are eating, even if they're eating organic grass or they're in fields that are organic. It's still an issue where a lot of these persistent organic pollutants are found in animal fat, and then, also too environmentally, like what we put on our bodies, and what we're breathing throughout the day, and, you know, the plastic that we're exposed to.

So I did like a full 180 and I started really paying attention to everything. Right? I got rid of all the plastic in my house, I made sure everything I put on my skin was totally natural, ratcheted way down on the animal fat. I eat most of my fat now from, you know, like avocados, coconut, extra-virgin olive oil. I still eat bacon, I will still have a big, old ribeye, but it's not like the main part of my protein intake, right, or the fattier cuts of meat. And it has completely solved my hormonal disarray.

So I think that's one thing that a lot of women aren't aware of. Right? Like, "Okay, there is that connection there and this might actually be affecting my hormones," and especially as we get older. Definitely wanted to bring that up, so thank you for asking. I hope that that's helpful for some women who are listening trying to sort things out.

Katie: Yeah, I think you're right. And it's so helpful to start exploring that because, when you get in a dogma, and then, you get an idea of what things are healthy and you stick with that, your body may be telling you something different. And my example of that, I look back, and jokingly I say, "I wrote the post about coconut oil," and literally, on and off for the past 10 years, we've ranked number one for the term coconut oil. And I like use coconut oil for everything because, when I first was trying to figure out what was going on with my body and I had Hashimoto's, but I didn't know it, I replaced dairy with coconut, in the short term, because I knew I had gut issues and I felt better off dairy. But what's funny is, in hindsight, I still had leaky gut probably at that point, I was still working through it and I ate so much coconut that I actually made myself intolerant to coconut. And so, I had to listen to my body and not stick with this dogma of like, "Coconut equals good."

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Katie: And I've noticed the animal thing too. For me, it was helpful to switch into like tons of green veggies. For me, I do better with cooked, which those also detox estrogen. So I feel like green veggies are, in most cases, great, unless you have a very specific issue going on. And then, like I do a lot better with seafood. So I switched away from a lot of animal fats and more into like seafood and those types of animal fats, which I guess they're still animal fats, but I felt so much better when I made that switch as well.

Sarah: Right. And it goes back to, again, you know, not being dogmatic about any of this. Right? So I feel like sometimes even the things that I say, even though I'm being very clear, please find what works for you. Women want to know exactly what to do, right? You know, so they wanna hear like, "Tell me to do this and I will do it." And that's great and there's always a good jumping off point, but I still just wanna encourage your listeners to continue to be your own investigator. Right? Like you need to be your like Sherlock Holmes when it comes to this stuff. And that sounds a little bit overwhelming and daunting, but when you go back to that whole perspective shift of just being in tune with your body and being okay with where you are right now, loving where you are right now. I know that's hard, like, how do I love where I am right now when I feel like hot garbage? Well, you know what? Our bodies are amazing and they're telling us all the time what we're doing, whether it's good, or bad, or indifferent, or whatever. And it's not about feeling shame around that, or guilt, or grief even. I mean it's okay to grieve that, I've actually have grieved a lot over like, "Wow, my body is not going to ever be the same," right, "it's not ever going to probably be able to handle like super intense exercises like it used to." And it's okay to grieve that but not to live there and wallow in that, you know. To just be like, "Okay, this is the input. What can I do next to make a shift to feel better and love where I am right now? Because my body is amazing, it's telling me what it is that I need to do differently. I just need to tune in and listen to make those changes." So, you know, what works for Katie, might not work for me. What works for me, might not work for the listeners. But, you know, starting to just really be that Sherlock Holmes is step one for sure. And I'm cracking up about the coconut thing, right? It's always like this, that thing we think that saves us turns around and bites us in the butt.

Katie: Totally, yeah. Absolutely. And I think you're right, it goes back to that mindset and the gratitude as well. Because, you know, like it's easy to focus on our flaws and to feel bad about those but if you look at it objectively, like I have to look back and be like, "My body grew six humans, of course it's never gonna look like it did when I was 16." But it grew six entire human beings and birthed two of them breech, and like all this stuff. And so, I'm trying to focus on what it can do. And I love that about lifting weights, especially heavy weights too. There's something so encouraging about being able to like pick something really heavy off the ground and be like, "I just did that." It shifts your mindset away from deprivation and, "Oh, I need to run to burn more calories," into "Wow, look what my body can do."

Sarah: Absolutely. Absolutely. I think it should be required for all young girls to start a weight-training program, so they can start to feel more empowered. And, you know, we have a couple of younger girls in our gym right now. I remember one in particular, she's just...I love her dearly. And she was like, when she first came to us, she was like, "I want to be able to see my tricep," and we were like, "Oh, no." And now, she's like, "I just squatted 180 pounds," and she's just so in her own spirit. And it's awesome, and I'm like, "Yay, you're set up. You're good," like you're gonna be okay." Like her perspective already is in the space of empowerment and being able to just own her strength. And I haven't heard her mention anything about her tricep since she stepped into the gym. So, you know, like I just want all women to hear that it's so much more about what you can do in this world and what you have already done.

And I do the same thing, Katie. Like when I start to think about, man, I'm super bummed that, you know, whatever it is about my body, and I can always find something. You know, I always try to lean into all the amazing things that I have accomplished. Like this body has served me well, like I have raised three boys and, you know, at 42, I can go to the gym and lift weights, and I am able to, you know, hike, and go outside, and keep up with my 11-year-old, and do all these things that I wouldn't be able to do otherwise. So yeah, I'm really grateful you brought that up.

Katie: For sure. And yeah, I remember the first time I dead-lifted 250 pounds, and realized when I did that, I was like, wow, I just picked up more weight than all of my kids combined at the time, they're bigger now. But I was like, wow. Like it's just such a different mindset. And for anybody who's struggling with health issues...because for me, I mean with Hashimoto's and having six kids and all these things, like especially weight loss is a very slow process for me. And so, I've found other metrics to focus on that like stay very encouraging. Because I think if you're just, you know, like dieting, exercising, you're only focused on weight as your metric. It can get discouraging if that doesn't move for a long time.

And so, I run labs on myself a couple times a year at least, and it's really encouraging to see all my lab numbers move towards these perfect ranges and look optimal and look great. And like heart-rate variability is an easy thing to track, it's actually super correlated with longevity and all of these really positive metrics. And it's something you can improve. And so, having those tangible things where I'm like, okay, even while I'm still working, to look maybe how I wanna look, I know that my hormones are good, and my blood levels are good, and my heart-rate variability is good, and my sleep is good. And those things are all gonna help me live a long time and be here for my kids for a really long time. And so, that to me has just been like a really positive mindset shift.

Sarah: Absolutely. And I'm so glad that you brought up heart-rate variability because it's such a good tool for women like myself who don't always remember that I shouldn't use exercise as a stress relief. Right? Because that's been my go-to for years and years and years. And it's sometimes hard to cue in to that message, right, when it's like kind of our default, our go-to. And using HRV is a really good tool also, not to just measure your health in general, but also to know if it's a good day to go to the gym or if it's a good day to rest. It's kind of like your best-friend's voice, right? Like, okay, my body is very clearly telling me that this is a good day for me to just go take a walk in the park versus go to the gym and try and push myself. So, you know, I encourage women out there who are starting to, you know, tune more into their bodies and change their programming up a bit to use that as a tool. And it's really easy to do and it's very clear. So yeah, super great. Super, super great.

Katie: So I've definitely touched on it in passing but I wanna like just give us kind of an overview of all of the parts of the book. Because I got an advanced copy, that's one of the perks of being your friend, which I'm really grateful for, but kind of walk us through. Because I love the approach you guys took, and I love like this encouraging, uplifting, just super positive environment that you create in the book, but walk us through kind of the pillars of the book.

Sarah: Sure. So our book is based on our five habits, which is kind of like the lifestyle-exercise-diet components. So five habits, and then, we have our five pillars which is like the mindset tools that we teach you throughout the book to help make those five habits stick, which is what we were talking about earlier. So the five habits really is a good jumping-off point, but then, after week one where everybody starts doing the same thing, like you all are gonna have to begin somewhere, right, so let's make some subtle shifts and tweaks to help support your hormones wherever they are. And then, during the second week or at the beginning of the second week, we actually have you take a quiz that will give you a really good insight as to what your hormones are doing, right, so what's going on with you and your health. So is it possible that you have like low-thyroid or cortisol issues, low cortisol, or high cortisol, or both? Or what's going on with, you know, insulin resistance, and then, estrogen and progesterone?

And the reality is is that most women have issues with multiple hormones. It's very, very normal because why? Once one thing gets out of whack, it kind of goes downstream and will negatively impact all of our other hormones. And then, we have what we call our hormone hierarchy. Which is I think so important because there's a lot of books out there on like thyroid health, or on PCOS specifically, or maybe on like insulin resistance. But none of them tackle like, okay, well, what do I do when, you know, a lot of these hormones are out of whack which is basically every woman? Right? So we teach you how to use our hormone hierarchy to then customize those five habits, which is basically like the strength training, and the walking, and how to eat, and the sleep, and all the stuff that, you know, the lifestyle stuff that I'm sure your listeners are very savvy to. But then, we teach you how to customize that plan based on our hormone hierarchy. Because that's where it starts to get really complex for women. It's like, okay, so I have low and high cortisol and I have insulin resistance. So, with insulin resistance, I'm told to eat less often and exercise more, but with a thyroid disorder, I'm told to eat more carbs and not exercise at all. So where does that leave me? What am I supposed to do with that? So we teach you how to approach, you know, first healing those most delicate hormones, then moving on downstream, and to focus on, you know, things like insulin resistance or estrogen-progesterone issues.

But what's exciting is, once you start to heal those more delicate hormonal issues, everything else starts to kind of balance out as well. So the book really focuses on like cortisol and insulin because those are the two main hormones that we have the most control over. But the plan is really in-depth when it comes to the mindset stuff because that, like you've already heard me say, is really the foundation on which all of these will land. And we've had hundreds of women now go through this program online, and the results have just been absolutely outstanding in that women are actually able to sustain these tools that they're learning about themselves. And then, what's great is this plan isn't just like a 4-week plan and then you're done. This will carry you throughout the rest of your life. And once something happens, right, say you have a baby and your hormones change a little bit, you can always go back to the quiz and find out, okay, well, what's going on with me now? Maybe I need to make that subtle shift in my diet or my exercise dependent on what's going on with my ACES. Or another acronym we use is RAMP, which is an acronym for learning how to gauge whether or not you're overtraining. Right?

And we have what we call...I'm not sure if I can swear on your podcast, Katie, but we have a scale that has a bad word in it that you can use every day if you want to, to kind of monitor how you're doing. You know, if your plan is working day-to-day, and we have 12 tangible tools that you can take some or leave some, which again are all mindset tools that you can use like in the moment, in those stressful kind of freak-out moments to help bring you back down, tap into your parasympathetic, keep you out of fight-or-flight, keep those cortisol levels normal. So, in a nutshell, it is a 4-week plan but it's customizable and it carries you through no matter what happens down the road. So I'm very, very proud of it and excited.

Katie: I love it. And a couple other questions I love to ask at the end and I can't wait to hear your responses to, the first being what's a piece of advice that you really wanna leave with the audience today?

Sarah: I think the big thing which I've already touched on is just to give your listeners permission that it's okay to be exactly where you are right now, and living in the past, it only brings on depression. And I'm speaking from experience when we live in regret and, you know, we look back at, you know, what we did yesterday, or the day before, or three years ago, and we beat ourselves up and we don't ever forgive ourselves for a myriad of things. Like we are all so good at just living in yesterday, and that really is what creates depression and sadness.

And then, if we're not living in the past, we're often in the future, which creates anxiety. And that's a bit of big issue for me too. Right? Like, well, what's the next big thing that I'm gonna do? How am I going to accomplish this? What if I don't have the finances for that? What if my kids get in trouble? What if my relationship falls apart? What...on and on. What if my health...what if I die of breast cancer? What if I get Alzheimer's, that my dad's struggling with that right now? And it's just all these things. Right? So living in the future creates major anxiety and just that reminder that we only have right now. And just imagine how much more content you would be if you decided that right now is the most important thing. And not to say that you can't be driven or continue to work hard on what it is that you want to accomplish, it's not about becoming complacent, it's about staying open to whatever the possibilities might be that this amazing world has to offer you. And changing that perspective to that more positive one of just enjoying where you are right now, finding something that brings you that, you know, moment of joy throughout your day and deciding to be okay. So that would be my one piece of advice.

Katie: Awesome. And obviously, other than your own book, which I would highly recommend, I'm curious if there is a book or a number of books that have really had a dramatic impact on your life? And if so, what they are?

Sarah: So many, so, so many. But I will recommend one book that I read years ago that really kind of...it really spurred my interest in mindfulness practice and also, after reading it, just left me with such a deep sense of peace. And it's one of those books where I was like, "I wanna hold onto that feeling I have right now forever." And then, it was that realization that it takes a lot of work to be able to hold onto that sense of peace, and that it is fleeting, and that it does take consistency and it does take a lot of self-love, and nourishment, and nourishing. But that book is called "The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself" by Michael Singer. And I had it on my nightstand forever. And finally, I was in a place...I don't even remember now, five or six years ago, where I was in a really rough spot emotionally. And I looked at that book and I'm like, "Okay, it's time." And just his words were so comforting, and his story was so relatable. And it seemed a little foo-foo at first but I really just like forced myself to get through that part where I'm like my, you know, critical self was like, "This is just a bunch of garbage. You can't just make yourself feel better like that."

But it's so true and, you know, it really helped me learn that that voice in my head is not who I am. Like who I am is the person who can control that voice in my head and observe it and notice it. Like who I am is my heart and my soul. Right? I am that space where I can lean into that peace and be present, and observational versus reactionary, and constantly driven by stress, and that I do have choice in that. And that does bring me so much peace when I remember that, and I go to that. Because I'm not perfect at it, nobody is. But that book in particular was really impactful for me.

And then, another book that I recommend to all of my clients is, it's called "When Things Fall Apart" by Pema Chodron. And she is a Buddhist nun, actually she's a Western woman who, through her own life experience, decided to go down the path of Buddhism. But she really blends like her Western upbringing with the Eastern philosophy. And it's also such a relatable book. And it's one of those books where you can like just open it up anywhere and start reading. And I always get like this, "Oh, aha. Okay. That applies to me right now." So, you know, anyone interested in mindfulness practice, I definitely recommend that one as well.

Katie: I love it, those are both new ones for me, so I'm adding them to my own reading list. And I can't wait to jump in.

Sarah: Awesome.

Katie: Well, I know you're so busy and I'm so grateful that you took the time today. And like I said, we've been friends online forever, and I'm so excited about your new book. We'll make sure there are links to it in the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](http://wellnessmama.fm). It's also anywhere books are sold. Where else could people find you and stay in touch online?

Sarah: Well, my website is a great place, sarahfragoso.com. And then, I'm on Instagram and on Facebook, so sarah\_fragoso on Instagram. And Facebook at Everyday Paleo and also at Sarah Fragoso. So I'm all over, I'm out there.

Katie: Awesome. Well, those links will be in the show notes as well. But thanks for the time today and for being here.

Sarah: Oh, thank you so much, Katie. It was so wonderful getting to hang out with you for an hour. And I wish we lived closer, so we could just wrap this up and go have a cup of tea.

Katie: Oh my gosh, me too. But yeah, this was great to catch up. And thanks to all of you for listening and for sharing your most valuable asset of your time with both of us today, we're so grateful that you did. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the Wellness Mama Podcast.

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