



## Episode 316: 17 Practical Time Saving Systems for Parents (& How I “Get It All Done”)

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Hello, and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from [wellnessmama.com](https://wellnessmama.com), and this episode is just me. And I'm answering one of the questions I get asked most often online, which is, "How do I get it all done and balance work and family and self-care and all of the demands that we face in modern life?" So, today, I'm gonna walk you through my systems and how I do it. But there's a few things I wanna make sure I mention and that you guys understand before we jump in.

First, and most importantly, I don't do it all, not every day and not even close. So, I've written about so many things on the blog. There's 1,300 blog posts, and there is no way that I get all of that done every single day. That's a combined 10 years of knowledge and experiments, and I don't even do all of those things all the time.

So, full disclosure, some days my house is a complete disaster. There have been days where we eat Magic Spoon cereal for dinner. And I've tried about a lot of experiments over the years. I've written about a lot of them, but I definitely don't maintain all of them every single day. I found the 80/20 rule that works for me, and I maintain based on that. I'm gonna talk more about that later in the episode. But I just wanted to start by

saying I don't do it all, and I don't ever wanna be some standard that someone sees on social media and then feels bad because of comparing to.

Number two, in modern life, we as moms especially but parents in general, we face a lot more demands than parents have in the past, and it does take more effort to manage everything. And it's important to remember, we are not failing because it seems harder than it did for our parents. It actually is harder. I think there are some things we can do to make it less so, but it actually is harder than it used to be for our parents.

So, I think we can use a lot of advantages of technology and use systems to make things easier if we're intentional about that, and I'm gonna share a lot of my tips for that today. But acknowledging and understanding that there's just more to manage in modern life than previous generations had had to deal with.

Number three, before we jump in, you should understand that I am absolutely a nerd, and I use math to solve problems in most of my life, including a lot of the stuff I'm gonna talk about in this podcast. I apologize in advance if you aren't a math person, but the ideas still work even if you don't care about the math side. So bear with me through that part.

And lastly, these systems are what work for me and my family, and I'm sharing practical examples and trying to go into as much detail as possible in hopes that this will be helpful to you as well. It's a no way meant to be like a black and white standard for any other family, and it is certainly not meant to be a judgment of anyone else's systems or how they manage their life. You may end up with something completely drastically different than what I've created, and that's not just okay. That's awesome.

I think that one of the things that we as parents need the most right now that our children need to see is an example of how people can have different views or ways of doing things and still get along and treat each other with respect and kindness. So imagine how much all of our stress levels would change if we all did that in our interactions in person and especially online. So, none of this is meant to be a judgment of anyone who does anything differently. I'm just sharing my systems and hopes that they will be parts of this that can be helpful to you.

I think there are some commonalities that can be helpful in staying on top of the demands of modern life and all the things we do face. And so I'm gonna base these next 17 tips on that and hopes that they will be helpful to you as well.

So, with that said, tip number one, start with the 80/20 principle or the idea of kind of a minimum effective dose, and this is the Pareto principle if you've heard of that. It's also known as the 80/20 rule, or I think it's also called the law of the vital few or in math, the principle of factor sparsity.

And boiled down, it basically means that in a lot of different areas, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes, or 80% of the results come from 20% of the inputs or the activities. And this is used in sports, and there are examples of it in economics. It's used in computing. But I found it extremely helpful in managing modern life as well, especially in motherhood. Of all the people in the world who I feel like need to be more efficient, moms are for sure at the top of the list. I've always said that moms are the busiest and most effective people on the planet and that if you can give moms more bandwidth and reduce overwhelm, moms can absolutely change the world. So I figured if top performers in business are using this and economists and mathematicians and even sports teams that they were things that were valuable that moms could use as well.

You know, there's that joke that evolution must not work because moms still only have two hands, and I think we actually really need clones or at least two brains to manage it all. But I feel like keeping this rule in mind helps me to focus on the things that are most important in all of those areas that I'm responsible for managing and still feel like I'm getting most of it done without dropping plates or feeling like I'm letting things fall through the cracks. So I find myself constantly applying this rule to various aspects of life, and it's made me much more efficient. Even just starting to think in the terms of 80/20 and like what are the 20% of things that I need to do and focus on the most, that has taken the stress off of the other 80%. This will be woven in throughout the podcast, and I'll give practical examples of how you can use that in various aspects of your life.

So, tip number two would be to simplify food in your home. And just as I mentioned in the last tip, we tend to eat the same 20% of meals about 80% of the time. And so realizing this, I was able to start planning for that, and I realized I could automate a lot of our eating by understanding that. So, this reduces the need to meal plan as much. It also simplifies shopping because I know ahead of time, I can streamline food preparation, and it really kind of just takes the mental guesswork out of planning food in general. And this also helps things like keeping the pantry stocked, and it also means that when I travel or things get really busy, someone else can fill in parts of that system as well.

So on a practical level, here are some of the ways that I implement this. I keep a list, and I stock my most common pantry staples as we...80% of our pantry staples come from things like Primal Kitchen, Paleoalloy beef sticks, tuna and sardines from Thrive Market, other condiments, bulk items, nuts, rice, quinoa, etc. I can actually put a list of those in the show notes so that you can see kind of my constant reorder list. But rather than trying to reinvent the wheel every time, I know roughly what those things are and how often and how quickly we go through them. So I can actually either set up auto-orders for some of those things or at least just have a list in my phone. I use the Notes app constantly so that when it's time to order, I know where everything is in one place.

I also create an 80/20 meal plan, and I can share more detail about this in a future podcast as well. But the short version is that for each of the seasons, I focus on the things that are in season and least expensive. So basically, the vegetables that are in season in spring, summer, fall, and winter, and I plan around those because, in general, then I know those are less expensive when they're in season and also more nutrient-dense. And I focus only on meals that I know the whole family likes that are easy to prepare, that are

inexpensive, and that are nutrient-dense. And with those criteria, I find our top 14 meals for each season, and I only had to do this once because, once it's done, it's repeatable.

So then once I have the 14 meals for each season, I separate those into two weekly menus and create shopping lists for each one. I use the Real Plans app, and I'll put a link to that in the show notes because it's extremely helpful. And you can input your own recipes into it, and it will auto-generate a shopping list that you can then if you already have ingredients check them off. You can adapt it for your family size or for all kinds of things. And then I print out the two-week meal plans together and the shopping list, and I put them in little sleeves and kind of put them in a notebook, so they are in the kitchen. So in other words, if that was confusing for a second, I make two one week meal plans for each season.

So for winter, it might focus on veggies like cabbage and greens and sweet potatoes and root veggies and cruciferous vegetables, and for each season, there's different vegetables. And then we alternate those weeks. We go back and forth between those two one week meal plans. So we're not eating anything more than once every 14 days. So there's plenty of variety built in, and also because it's pre-planned, anyone can handle the shopping and anyone can handle the cooking. So if things are busy, my husband could handle the shopping if he needed to, or I could just order the groceries online. I know what I need with everything in one place. And because the recipes are already printed, the kids are able to jump in and prepare meals sometimes, or I already have it there, or if grandparents are staying while we're traveling, it's just easy for someone else to jump in and handle the system.

I also spend 20% of time making 80% of the food with bulk cooking. And I don't do this every single week, but especially on busy weeks, I do try to prioritize this. So often I will double recipes to have leftovers for breakfast or lunches or just block out some time on the weekend and pre-prepare as much as possible for the week. And my kids usually make breakfast and lunches on their own, and I really just focus on family dinners. But if when I can, I'll double recipes, and that way they have that for breakfast or lunch without them having to make something else. And I know that there's always nutrient-dense options available. So that's kind of the food system. Again, I'll do a whole podcast on this in the future that breaks down and then share all the specifics of what that actually looks like because it's been a huge time and money saver. But it's really as simple as starting with that kind of system, and then you only have to create those four meal plans with the alternating two weeks, and you've got a repeatable meal plan for the year.

Tip number three would be to establish systems for clothing in the house. This is another area where you really can apply the 80/20 principle. If you think about it, a lot of us wear the same 20% of our clothing about 80% of the time. I don't know about you, but this is especially true with my kids. The younger ones especially have like these kinds of four or five favorite outfits that they just wear over and over and over, and everything else in their drawer was just pretty much ignored. So, knowing that, I realized that paring down reduces mental and physical clutter, and it was an area that I could easily simplify.

So if we do this for everybody in the house, there's less in the house that we have to manage. There's less laundry, and less things end up on the floor. I have blog posts about capsule wardrobes for kids, and I've been

implementing this with myself as well. But you can find those blog posts online. Just google Wellness Mama capsule wardrobes or check out the show notes for really like specific examples of what that looks like for my kids.

But it's really as simple as having smaller amounts of clothing that are all relatively easy to combine and that go with each other and that all fit in a drawer easily and that the kids are capable of pairing. But for me, this is something I've been...especially as I've like changed sizes so much, and I had to get rid of most of my clothes, anyway I try to simplify as I had to buy new clothes. So I just have two pairs of jeans that I absolutely love, and that beats having a lot more pairs of jeans that mostly kind of fit or they aren't quite as comfortable and I usually don't wear anyway. And so I've just tried to simplify that for myself as well.

I think this is different for each family, and certainly, depending on climate, you may need a lot more clothing or different kinds of clothing or if you travel a lot or your climate changes a lot. But in general, I kind of try to stick to that same type of system of having...by season, those simple clothing that all kind of goes together and just minimizing because I...I mean, we all have so many more clothes typically than we actually need.

Tip number four. I wanted to make this one early on in the podcast because I think it's one that moms tend to ignore a lot, which is to work in self-care regularly. And this is another area that is completely different for every single person. But most parents, and especially moms, statistically, we don't get enough sleep, and we don't have enough time for self-care. And I actually kind of hate that word because I think it's become kind of...it's just ambiguous and applies to a lot of different things that maybe brings up ideas of taking bubble baths, which I just personally don't ever have time to do.

But I think for moms, a lot of times, this seems like an impossible item on the to-do list because everybody else gets priority before us, and we've got so much to manage. Hopefully, all the systems in this podcast help create time to make this easier. But I also know that during the younger years of our kids' life, it can be really tough to find time for self-care at all.

But like other areas, if we can identify the 20% of things that are most important for us in self-care, so those 20% of things that reduce stress the most or that seem to replenish us the most, then we could focus on those things when we actually do have the time. So for me personally, just as examples, this is things like getting in the sauna almost daily whenever I can, moving around even for a short period of time. I'm not saying exercise. I don't think I'll ever be the type to exercise for an hour a day. This is things just like walking or like running outside for a minute or handstands, that kind of thing. Just working in movement regularly makes a big difference for my mindset.

Also, spending quality time with my husband and close friends makes a big difference in my mindset. And, of course, community and so many other beneficial things are built into that as well. So it's self-care, but it's also beneficial in other aspects of life. Taking certain supplements has been really helpful for me just in making sure that I had the physical and mental resiliency that I needed to manage everything.

And I've mentioned this before several times in the podcast about morning sunlight. So, this was the advice of my doctor years and years ago when I first got diagnosed with Hashimoto's to spend some time outside as soon as possible after waking up. This is really important for circadian rhythm. I see a difference in my sleep and then my stress levels, and it's time outside usually with my husband or kids. So it's also community time as well. So those are my things that I tend to prioritize and that I notice effects in other areas from. They are gonna be different for each person, but if you can identify the things that kind of replenish you and fill you up the most, and you can even just work in tiny bits of them during the day, you may see a big difference in your mindset.

So tip number five, realistic minimalism in our households. So, just like I mentioned in food and in clothing and even in self-care, we tend to use the same 20% of stuff in our house most of the time too. And, for instance, kids will use the same 20-ish percent of toys most of the time. Over time, I've used a whole lot of systems to minimize and reduce stuff, and I think there's a lot of different approaches that work. There's Marie Kondo systems. There's all kinds of organizing systems.

For the kids' toys, when I implemented this, I actually just put most of their toys in the attic, and then I didn't get them back out unless they asked for a specific one. I try to pare down two types of toys that could all go together and be easily stored like Legos and avoid buying single-purpose toys. And when we first started making that switch, I literally just put most of the toys in the attic one day. And if they were like, "Hey, mom, have you seen whatever?" I would go find that specific toy, but most of the things they never even missed. And keeping the things in the attic for a few months gave me that time to find those things if there was something that was really important to them without just getting rid of something and them missing it. We were able to get rid of so much that way.

But some specific tips, because I think if you minimize too quickly or drastically, you can kind of upset the applecart in a home. So I think it's important to lead by example in this. So don't start by just throwing away all of the kids' stuff or getting rid of it instantly. That's why I used the attic thing. But also I think it's important to set the example and us do it first. So, before we start throwing away all the things they love, we need to do that for ourselves and show the example and also reduce our own mental clutter by doing that. So, for me, I started with our own closets and with my bedroom, and that felt manageable. And I didn't have to involve the kids, but I would talk to them about the process and let them see the difference it made before I started tackling their stuff. And then I let them be involved when we actually started getting rid of their stuff.

Also, we found it helpful to have like a little donation station in our house. So this is basically just a large box, a tote in a closet, that is a place where the kids know and we know that they can put stuff. So this is where people can put anything they no longer want or need, and it's also a judgment-free zone. I think I tried not to do this, but it's like when something was a gift to a child or something that we would want them to have, it's hard not to be like, "Oh, you're getting rid of that." But the donation station is a judgment-free zone. Anyone can put anything in there to donate even if it was a gift without judgment.

So also grouping by categories was really helpful for me. This is one thing that I do think the “life-changing magic of tidying up” I got absolutely right because you can't really see how much of something you own if you don't see it all in one place. And so my advice is to gather all of the same things, so, for instance, all of my clothing or all of the kids' toys, whatever it would be. I don't do the whole thing where I see if it sparks joy, but seeing everything in one place helps me think of like 80/20. So I keep 20% of these things and get rid of most of the others.

Like as a practical example of this. The categories I kind of used when we did this whole master minimizing thing. Clothing and closets were each their own category. Our bedroom was a category. Each of the kids' bedrooms was its own category. The kitchen obviously its own category. Like outdoor stuff in the garage was its own category. And then like linens kind of were their own category and paperwork, which was the bane of my existence, was its own category as well.

For me, things like the schoolroom and personal items like sentimental items are not on this list because I can't pare down school stuff to 20% when we actually only buy the stuff that we actually need for that. So now we just use clothes storage to keep the school stuff and try to minimize everything else. Also, for kids, I found it really helpful with trying to keep things minimized is to define physical boundaries because they are often very concrete and visual, especially at young ages. And so this helps them understand limits on their belongings in a positive way that isn't stressful. I actually first learned this tip from a friend who they sold their house and moved into a camper and traveled, and they had five kids. And so each kid got a very specific size box where they had to keep all of their toys, and they could bring whatever they wanted as long as it fit in that box. And so just having that kind of idea, I applied that to our house even though we don't, you know, live in an RV.

We were able to kind of apply that, "You can pick all the toys that you want and whatever you wanna keep. It just needs to fit within these boundaries." So, for instance, it could be that all toys need to fit in a toy box or that if they have a collection of something, it all needs to fit in a specific shelf or display or if it's stuffed animals, my youngest loves stuffed animals, she can have them all, but they have to fit within her little bed so that they're not everywhere all the time. This is also important and has been really helpful with kids sharing rooms. That way they each have their own specific area where they can have their personal possessions. You can also then enforce like, "This is private space. You need to ask your sibling before you touch anything that's in this area." It might be the side of the bed or on the dresser or underneath the bed or whatever it may be, but that way they have their own space that they feel like is theirs. And this also makes it much more manageable.

Tip number six. Use the same idea to create time management systems. And in my mind, time is actually the most important area to 80/20 because, just like in the other areas, I feel like 80% of our stress can sometimes come from 20% of the inputs. And I think like this is where we should absolutely start with time management. So identify the activities that are causing the most stress for you and then figure out how to simplify, automate, or get rid of the stress from them at least.

You may not be able to get rid of the activity, but you can get rid of the stress from it. And I'm gonna talk more about that later on when I get to the mindset tips, but this is actually I think one of the more important things. And if you're gonna start with something, I would start with time management system. Conversely, I think it's important to identify the 20% of what we need to do in our time that brings the most happiness, so kind of like a little bit touching on that self-care idea.

To do this, look at your calendar and write out all of the activities that you have to do in a given week or month, whatever time period you wanna tackle, especially if things are repeating week after week. Like in my life, just write them out once. So identify those. And then it's important to find the areas where you can improve in both directions. So, basically, like write this out and prioritize the things that are causing the most stress and the things that are causing the most good and then 80/20, all of those areas, and prioritize.

So for me, this was things like for time management, meal planning and food saved a lot of time, batching and everything. So whether it's checking email or cleaning, etc., those are all in very specific times. I figured out the things that I absolutely had to do, the 20% that I couldn't let go of, and then I scheduled those things. So they were not negotiable. They had a time that they were gonna get done, but then I didn't have to worry about them when they weren't getting done. And then also create systems and get others involved when it doesn't need to be something that entirely falls on you.

And I wish I could give a lot more specifics to this, but I think my day to day life is probably not at all typical. And so my system may not be really specifically helpful just to hand off to you, but if you can work through your own calendar and find what are the activities and the systems, things you need, starting there and giving everything a time and a place and a defined area will really help with the mental stress. Also, in time management, so a tip on this. I take this 80/20 rule to mean that we should focus on the 20% that's most important before doing anything else in the 80%. So, I use this to tackle the most important and effective things each day. And I said I use my Notes app on my phone quite a bit, but in there, I'll put the top three activities I need to do in any given day, or it might be a couple more than that to get the top 20% done. And when I have time to work through things, those are what I prioritize first. So before I start doing the things that aren't important, I will tackle those things.

Tip number seven, and caveat, before I even say this, I know this is not always possible in certain stages of pregnancy and newborn life. But tip number seven, ruthlessly prioritize sleep because this is an area you can't actually 80/20. It's just directly based on time. You will not get 80% of your results from sleeping 20% of the time. That does not work. However, I think you can use the idea of this to improve sleep quality, especially if you're tracking your sleep. It took me years of experimentation to figure this out for me. I think there are some universal human commonalities when it comes to sleep. So I'll share those, but I also think there's value in tracking your own sleep.

Personally, I do this with an Oura ring, and you can check out the show notes, I have a discount code you can find there if you wanna get one. Basically, it's a ring that you wear, and it does have airplane mode, so if you're worried about the EMF. I always wear it in airplane mode. It doesn't have any EMF while I'm wearing it. And

then when I put on the charger to charge, it goes into Bluetooth mode, it syncs to my phone and then goes back into airplane mode. The Oura ring tracks things like your sleep quality, which has been really amazing to see because I started to notice the things that improve sleep and the things that really messed it up.

It also can track your activity. It tracks your heart rate variability, which is something I've talked about on here before. I think it's a really important metric as it kind of indicates your overall just adaptability and long-term potential like for longevity and all kinds of things. And it tracks a lot of other things as well, body temperature to heart rate, resting heart rate, etc. So that's been really helpful to me to actually dial all of these things down. This will vary somewhat by person like I said, but I think the 20% of things that make the biggest difference for me and it probably have universal application to some degree are things like being in bed by 10:00 p.m.

And full disclosure, I am not good at this. It does not happen every single night. In fact, it doesn't happen nearly as often as I would like to. But when I am in bed and asleep by 10:00 p.m., I see noticeable and immediate drastic changes in sleep and heart rate variability. And I know that's not always possible with kids but whenever it is... And I know as a mom too, it's that constant battle of, you know, "The kids are in bed. I'm tired and I wanna sleep, but I also just I'm enjoying this quiet time." And I often fall into that. I'd rather stay up and enjoy the quiet too. But there are measurable differences in my sleep when I prioritize the sleep at night.

Also, two things that have helped with my sleep quality that I drink almost every night unless I'm fasting are the Reishi Elixir from Four Sigmatic, which I'll probably link in the show notes to that, and Gold drink from Organifi. They're both actually reishi based and have other herbs that help improve sleep quality. And I will see about like 10% to 15% improvement in most of my sleep metrics when I use those. Just like I mentioned before, I don't use them every single day because I don't use anything every single day. But I do most nights drink one or the other of those, and I also take magnesium to help with sleep and see change from that. But I'm one of the weird small percent of the population, I can't actually take magnesium at night. So I take magnesium during the day and then notice a difference in my sleep at night.

Another thing that is drastic and I notice it every time I'm away from home, I use a Chilipad or an Ooler on my bed, and again, discount codes for those in the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](https://wellnessmama.fm). But these are basically devices that have...the part that's on your bed is not EMFs at all, and I have tested this. But it's basically a thin pad that goes underneath your sheet but on top of your mattress and that a machine runs cooled water through, or it can actually be any temperature water between 55 degrees and 110 degrees. There's a lot of data showing that the optimal sleep temperature is somewhere in between 60 and 70 degrees, and it takes a lot of energy to heat or cool our house to get within that range, and so just cooling our bed is much more energy-efficient.

The device itself is far enough away from the bed that it does not have measurable EMF readings when I'm in the bed. And I noticed just...I mean, noticeable without even tracking huge difference in my sleep when I use one of those devices. The Chilipad is the original. It's less expensive. The Ooler is more expensive but slightly more effective. But again, check out the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](https://wellnessmama.fm) for discount on both of those. I wish

so much that I had known about those when I was pregnant because that whole pregnancy sweat and like postpartum sweat, I think it would have made a drastic difference. But I noticed a huge difference in sleep from those, and I've given those as Christmas presents to many people because I love them so much.

Another thing that makes a noticeable difference, especially over time, this is more cumulative but is sauna use during the day. And I know I've talked about sauna use in a couple recent podcasts, so I won't go deep on all the benefits of that other than to say that the statistics are pretty incredible for a reduction of all-cause mortality, reduction of cardiovascular events, for weight loss, for all kinds of things. And when I sauna during the day, not too close to bedtime, I see sleep improvements, especially over time. Also movement during the day.

I'm not saying exercise. I know that it's hard often as moms to fit an exercise. Like what's gonna work for each person is such different here. But when I move in certain ways, I do notice improvements in my sleep. And so the things I typically tend to prioritize are things like just walking, not like intense walking. Just walking for fun makes a big difference. I've been doing high-intensity training only a couple times a week. I use the CAR.O.L. bike, but this can be done with sprinting or any kind of like cardio-based device. And that's really just like a 10-minute thing. So it's not a long program at all.

And then I just started integrating lifting weights a couple times a week, and that will temporarily reduce my HRV right after it because of the muscle pull or the muscle burn, but then over time, it gets much better. So, those are all kinds of the movements that have worked for me. Again, I think this is very individualized, and so those are the ones that work for me.

And then lastly, one tip for falling asleep more quickly and that I see about like for me usually about an 8-point improvement in my HRV when I do is using 4-7-8 breathing as I fall asleep. This is something I have written about, and I have a post about four sleep tips that actually work and also Dr. Andrew Weil mentioned on this podcast. But the idea is basically that you breathe in for a count of four and hold for a count of seven and then slowly breathe out for a count of eight. And the idea is you are using your breath to remove excess carbon dioxide from the body to calm and get into parasympathetic versus sympathetic nervous system. And it just overall helps.

I also find that when I prioritize sleep logically, I notice the effects in other aspects of life as reduced stress or being more efficient. So this is an area I try as much as possible not to compromise on and to prioritize. And I know that we probably all have that experience of when you don't get enough sleep how everything seems so much worse and how when you have a great night sleep, you feel almost unstoppable. So, I get it. It's easier said than done, especially as parents, but when we prioritize sleep, we get much more effective in other aspects of life.

Tip number eight, use the concept of minimum effective dose to fight perfectionism. So, I touched on this a little teeny bit in the 80/20 in the first tip. But to go back to this idea, minimum effective dose basically means

identifying the minimum input needed to create the result you want. Often as parents, I think we do a lot more than is needed to get a result because we want our house to look perfect or we feel the pressure to entertain the kids all the time or cook fancy meals or whatever it may be. But minimum effective dose is the idea of doing the smallest amount possible to accomplish what you will need to do.

So as an example, water boils at 212 degrees. Tim Ferriss use this example in his books as he talks about this. Boiling at a higher temperature or longer does not make the water more boiled. It boils at 212, and it boils at any temperature above that. And I use this idea in areas like nutrition and fitness and house management and organization because it helps me battle perfectionism. I think I have a natural tendency towards perfectionism, and it's not possible as a mom to maintain perfectionism in every area of life. So I try to, when I start falling in that mindset, go back to the idea of minimum effective dose and manage from there.

So, for instance, more working out is not necessarily better. I find that my body does better with less working out but very specific kinds. So I don't do any type of long cardio whatsoever. I focus on high-intensity interval training or otherwise known as HIIT. And you can look for HIIT studies to see all of the studies about this, but basically, from a VO2 perspective and a cardiovascular perspective, that's actually more effective than long-term cardio, and it doesn't have the potential downsides. So there's a lot of evidence that long-term cardio, especially running, can be really harmful for joints and also just for oxidative damage in the body.

So I do high-intensity interval training instead, minimum effective dose, more is not necessarily better, same thing with resistance and weights. I don't need to lift weights for an hour a day. Just doing specific ones for a certain amount of time makes a big difference. And then I work in fun stuff, not for exercise, but just for fun. That's like walking or swimming or paddleboarding and then the occasional intense stuff like pole vaulting just for fun.

I think there's also an important minimum effective dose when it comes to stress relief or meditation or whatever you do in this area. For me, this means if I can focus on my breath for just 10 minutes a day, that's my minimum effective dose. More meditating doesn't actually make me more calm or happy. I've learned that from experimentation so that I don't need to spend an hour a day meditating. I can accomplish that in 10 minutes a day.

So I'll often use, for instance, tapping apps like The Tapping Solution or specific breathing exercises, or some days, I will use the cold. So I'll sit in the cold tub for up to 10 minutes usually on 2, 5-minute increments, and that refocuses my mind, and I find my calm. So, this is again gonna be different for every single person, but if you start to analyze and pay attention in your life to what is the smallest amount that I can do to get the same result and stop doing extra stuff, that helps battle that perfectionism.

So, tip number nine, solve for the variable of reduced stress. I told you there'll be math involved. I apologize in advance if math is not your thing. But what I realized years ago and what I would postulate to you is that it isn't actually everything we have to get done that causes the stress. It's knowing all of the stuff that we need

to get done and having all of those mental loops open all the time. This is different for each of us, but I'll share some examples of mine.

In figuring out systems for how to get stuff done, I think this is the variable that you start with because it isn't always that we actually need to do less. In fact, a lot of times, we need to be able to get more done, although sometimes there may be a need to do less, and that's something to analyze in each person's life. But we need to solve...identify for and solve for the variables that are stressing us out the most. So in your life, what does this look like? What are the X and Ys of your stress equation?

Examples. I was trying to manage my whole family of eight in my head and then carrying the emotional and mental responsibility of everything that came with that family and all of those things rather than using the strategies that I had already used in business. So, using a lot of the things I've already talked about in this podcast and a few more that I'm still gonna cover, I started focusing on, "How can I reduce stress in this area and whatever it was, whether it was meal planning, whether it was work, whether it was kids?" And I solved for that variable. Now I'm able to actually do the same amount of stuff and actually probably get more done without the stress.

And, of course, 80/20 kind of plays into this as well being more efficient, more effective, the minimum effective dose, doing just what's required and not overachieving in every single area. But to start to solve for this if this is a new concept for you, I would suggest making a list of all of the things that stress you out the most and then detail specifically under each one what makes things more stressful. And you may find like I did that it isn't, for instance, cooking that causes the stress, is the constant need to figure out what to cook. It's that 4 p.m. like, "Oh, my gosh, everything's frozen. What am I gonna cook for dinner? I need to defrost something or finding the ingredients or cooking something and then family members not like it or complaining about it." Those are all variables we can solve for.

I actually realized I liked the cooking a lot, and if I could solve for those other variables by planning ahead, knowing what was gonna be cooked, batch cooking and then cooking only meals that were nutrient-dense and that we all liked, I could pretty much solve for all of those variables. I'll put some more specifics of that in the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](http://wellnessmama.fm). Another example, it may not be the actual laundry that causes the stress but the constant clutter related to the laundry or remembering to do it or forgetting the clothes in the washer and then smelling like mildew, or not having certain clothing when it's needed and it's sports time and a kid doesn't have a jersey. We can solve for those variables as well.

Like I mentioned, you as a mom don't necessarily need to do all the laundry, especially when your kids reach a certain age. For my kids, that's about four to five. They're able to handle their own laundry. Then it's the conscious effort of stopping carrying the emotional responsibility. In fact letting them carry it because truly if they make it...if they show up at soccer practice in a dirty jersey that smells like sweat because they didn't clean it, maybe they will learn that lesson. Whatever it may be, it's finding what's causing you the friction point, what's causing you the stress and then solving for that.

So it might not be our kids causing stress but the constant questions from them not knowing the schedule or for them being bored. And we can solve for those two. We can create a family culture that avoids boredom. We can have a schedule that they know so they know when things are gonna happen and be prepared. There's ways to actually take into account a lot of these variables. So make this list for yourself.

And then also I found it helpful to write out what a perfect scenario looks like in each of those areas when I wouldn't be stressed. So, when the food was handled, what does that look like? When the laundry was handled, what did that look like? When the kids were all happy and not bored and integrated, what did that look like? And in some cases, solving for these variables could mean reducing. So for instance, if here kids are doing a ton of activities each week, and your stress is caused by the constant go-go-go-go and being a chauffeur and running them around, then maybe part of the answer is to reduce activities or to just focus on the 20% that they enjoy the most. If it comes from clutter around the house, it may be important to de-clutter, but often a lot of the stress can be solved with just systems. And so again, it'll be different for each of us. I hope that my examples were somewhat helpful.

But also from a scheduling perspective, if you can define a time and a place for each activity and item, then you can take away its mental stress. So, for me, this meant when laundry was gonna happen at a certain time each day or each week, then I didn't have to worry about it when it wasn't going to happen. When I knew the meal plan for the next three months, I don't have to spend any energy thinking about that. So find those things that are causing you the most stress and then solve for those first. The variables are different for each person...for each person, but the systems can be kind of universally applicable, and once you find yours, it gets a lot easier.

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Tip number 10, get the family involved. So if you have kids, chances are they are probably part of the reason you have so much on your plate. With the goal of raising functioning adult humans and not perpetual children, it is I feel not just important but like actually vital to get the kids involved in the day-to-day operations of the house and the family, so they can learn life skills. And when we send them off into the world, they have those life skills. This has the benefit if we do it the right way of reducing stress for us as parents. And I touched on this in a couple of the other points about how natural consequences and kids being able to handle a lot of stuff.

But a few specifics just related to this, getting the family involved in creating this team mentality and culture. First rule...I've mentioned this a little bit before, but I'm gonna go deeper here. Stop doing what they can do for themselves. And, yes, there will always be exceptions to this, and, yes, I know that there may be times when I wanna spend time with my kids, I do something that they can do. But in general, universally, I have a rule that I won't do something for my kids that they can do themselves. I know that as parents, we can do it right, or we can do it better, and it's easier especially when they're young. But this is part of the reason we are so stressed is because we do. We do it because we can do it right or better.

I know as a new mom, I used to think about this. I did a lot more for my children because it was easier. It was objectively easier for me to load the dishwasher than teach them how to load the dishwasher. With my first child and even with the second arrived, I still actually could do everything for everyone, so I did. And in some ways, it was easier just to do it all. It was easier to get them dressed than let them take forever and end up in a mismatched outfit.

But as I had more kids and as more was added to my plate, I realized this wasn't a sustainable model. And I say this quite a bit and people are like, "Oh, my gosh, six kids. How do you get it all done?" I'm like, "Actually, I think having more kids has protected me and kind of saved me from a lot of the pitfalls I would have fallen into." Because it came to a point where it was not possible to do everything for everyone anymore, and so I had to get them involved. And I can't spend too much time with any one kid or spoil them or do everything for them because it's just there aren't enough hours in the day.

But more importantly than that, I'm glad that I had that realization because, as I mentioned, the goal is to raise adults, not adult-sized children. So, while it wasn't a big deal objectively for me to do the dishes and the laundry for them at a young age, it would be at some point. And so I had to figure out when would be the best time to teach them these skills and get them involved, and I realized there's only actually one logical answer to this question that makes sense across the board. And that is we should get them involved and require this of them as soon as they're capable of doing these things on their own if the goal is to raise responsible adults.

So I realized for me that I was doing a lot of things for my kids that they could be doing on their own, and not only was this extra stress and burden for me, it wasn't helping them in the long run anymore either. So I decided to give my kids more freedom by giving them the opportunity to learn these skills that they needed to function on their own and to feel the consequences of them when they didn't. And I think that, of course, every child is different, every family is different, and ability and maturity vary from child to child. Even within my own kids, I see that. Some of my kids have taken on certain jobs much earlier than others. But often, they have surprised me in how quickly and easily they could take on these things and how well they could execute even at a younger age than I expected. So, I will link in the show notes just some general guidelines I've used of at what age they take over which activities.

But for instance, one of my daughters learned to do her own laundry when she was four. She's been doing it ever since. So I think we often underestimate just how amazing and capable they are. But also just to reiterate when people ask how I get it all done and what the secret is, the secret is that I don't. We do it together. We're all part of a team. And they are involved and they very much contribute to the family. So actually, that's tip number 11 too is to foster a team mentality and family culture. As I started changing that with my kids and started letting go of tasks that my children were capable of, another amazing thing happened. It fostered a team mentality in our family, and they now feel great about really contributing to our family because they actually do. Their contributions are important. The things they do around the house actually matter, and they are very much part of this team.

And certainly, in that transition, I had some moments of weakness where I try to just take things back over. But now this is part of our culture, and they get to really feel like they're important to the family, and they actually are very important to the family. I realized at this point when I was making this switch, that there are many correlations between business teams and family. And I had mastered one in business, but until that point, I had not transferred those skills to the other. So, people think I have it all together and like I just get it all done. I talk about how years ago when I was really stressed and before I kind of put all of these things I'm talking about today in place, I think I realistically came very close to a nervous breakdown.

I had an amazing team at Wellness Mama to rely on, and things were running great. We had goals and systems that helped the business run really smoothly, and I didn't usually feel very stressed in my work life. But at home, I was trying to manage everything, like I mentioned, on my own in my head. And unlike my business systems, I was flying by the seat of my pants, and I felt the stress as a result. So, this shift of everyone in our house being able to do the task they were capable of and to build that team culture was life-changing.

On the other hand, when I was handling everything myself and I was problem-solving for my kids, I was essentially sending my kids the message that they weren't capable of doing those things on their own. So I was worried that I was gonna burden them if I required them to do these things, but really, I was treating them like long-term incapable guests in my home and not as an essential part of our family team. And now that they know that they're involved and they feel like their contributions really matter because they do, this has strengthened our family bond and culture and led to less stress and more time together and things like you might have heard me mentioned before, our motto, you were made to do hard things, or our focus on

constantly improving and learning and moving things forward. So, that team mentality has been really amazing for us.

Tip number 12. Rely on natural consequences versus nagging. And I mentioned this earlier in passing, but I think it deserves actually its own point because the other great part of this approach to handing off skills is the built-in use of natural consequences. Like I said, for me, when my kids handled their own laundry, they run out of clean clothes, guess what? They learn the importance of doing their laundry. I don't hold on to the stress and the emotional responsibility anymore or worry about what will happen if they don't get it done because it's not my responsibility.

And other examples, my kids are homeschooled, but when we travel or whatever it may be, they are capable of making their own school lunches. They're capable of doing most of their school work on their own. If they forget either of those things, rather than me rescuing them, kids get to learn from temporary hunger or a bad grade to remember these things in the future. And I know as parents, we wanna protect them from those hardships, but long-term, there's not gonna be someone in their life to protect them from those hardships. So, I figure it's much better to let them learn on a smaller scale in these relatively inconsequential things like being hungry for one meal than when they're adults. And don't get me wrong. I get the desire to protect our kids from discomfort, but the discomfort of natural consequences can have that long-term benefit. So these are things that we hold on to the stress and responsibility of and try to protect them from but we don't need to. And in fact, it might actually be hurting our kids.

So, here's what I realized. When I started looking at the data on this, it was really staggering. And the statistics are that one in four college-aged students and college graduates still live at home, one in four. Psychologists talk about there's an increasing number of adults who have trouble actually making this shift into adult life outside of their parents. And it turns out, when we look at long-term data, our kids are happier, in the long run, the earlier they learn independence. The research shows that children who have really involved parents actually can have more anxiety and less satisfaction with life than children who are allowed to learn from natural consequences and play unsupervised and build things like social skills and emotional maturity and executive function in real-life situations versus being managed by adults.

So as much as some days I wish I could just freeze time and keep my kids little and like baby age forever, they are insistent on growing up, and they need to be prepared for adult life. And as adults, we face natural consequences all the time. That's when I really realized I had to make a switch here. No one's protecting me from these adult...from natural consequences as an adult. And I've explained this to my kids. If I drive too fast, I can get a ticket. If I forget to pay a bill, the electricity can get shut down. There's no one who's gonna like leap in and rescue me. That's not how life works. And they needed to be able to learn this on a small scale before the stakes were quite so high.

Like I said, natural consequences are a very much a fact of life, and in my opinion, we need to give our kids the gift of being able to learn these baby steps from a young age. So this is not a thing you've done, which wasn't for me in the beginning. I kind of tried to develop a system for implementing this without creating mutiny,

because if your kids aren't used to doing all this stuff on their own and then one day you just decide they're gonna do everything on their own, you might have mutiny in your house.

So, when I decided to stop doing things they could do on their own, I realized it wasn't gonna happen overnight and there was probably going to be some resistance. I thought about like...during this phase, there's a quote I saw on Pinterest that said "Some moms run a tight ship. I run a pirate ship. There's some swearing, some drinking and a touch of mutiny from the crew I created." And I was trying to minimize the mutiny, but I needed a process for making the transition easier. And I created a system for this. I'll put a link to a post with more detail in the show notes. But it was a four check handoff that was really helpful in handing things off to them, making sure they were prepared to actually do it. So in order for this method to work, I had to give them the skills to be able to actually be effective at the thing I was requiring them to do, so I wasn't just giving them failure right off the bat.

So the four steps were, first was do it for them, and I had already done that. I was pretty good at it. But I let them watch, and I had them do...like watch me do it at first, and I explained the process. Second, I would do it with them. So, we would work on it together, and they could learn and they could ask questions. Third, I would oversee them. So the first couple of times, they unloaded the dishwasher, or they vacuumed. I would stay close and watch them, and they could ask questions, and I would give them constructive feedback. And then once they had been through those steps, I let it go. So they had a plan, they knew what the task was, and it became their responsibility. And I would still check in occasionally to make sure they were doing it well, but through that, I was able to hand off a lot of household tasks and let go of the guilt of feeling like I was solely responsible for managing the house and let them really actually become part of that process as well.

Number 13. Let go of perfection. Again, easier said than done. But one of the main reasons I was holding on to doing everything is I thought I was better at it, and I didn't want it to be done the wrong way. And it took some self-reflection and realizing that it was better to have things get done even imperfectly through shared responsibility and through teaching my kids valuable life skills than to do it myself and be stressed all the time and be a resentful mom or a stressed-out mom or a tired mom but with kids who were dressed perfectly and like didn't have to do anything.

I learned this in business years ago actually the hard way because I was a control freak, and I say that I'm a recovering control freak and recovering perfectionist. But I went through a phase of hiring people and not letting them do anything because I thought I could do it better, and I had to learn the hard way in business that everything got much more amazing and less stressful when I started actually integrating my team for what I hired them. So when I realized I could do each of these tasks better on my own, I certainly couldn't do all of them better if I was doing everything. That's the case in business, and that's certainly the case in...at home as well.

The same was true at home. I could definitely do each task better than my child could, at least at first, but at the expense of them having a calm and happy mom and at the expense of them learning independence. So, yes, a few pieces of clothing were ruined in the making of this process with some stains, but long term, this

was so worth it. And I now have extremely capable kids who are extremely self-sufficient. And a lot of people who I know in real life mention this all the time, how incredibly self-sufficient my kids are, which was my goal. And that way, things around the house are getting done.

And when I spend time with my kids, I am much more calm and present. They're much more calm and present and we get to actually nurture that relationship versus me constantly running around my head chopped off doing everything. But this also meant learning to give practical feedback on the process and telling them I was proud of them for working hard, always praising the effort, and then giving constructive feedback so they could get better and better over time.

I've read a lot of business books about this, kind of the idea of growth mindset and so some just practical tips that helped with this for me for getting them to want to be motivated and actually to do these things and to give feedback without hurting their feelings is to focus on a long-term positive mindset. I didn't expect or want them to get it all right all right away. The point is to get better step-by-step. So finding the things that they did good, finding and complimenting the effort and what that was and then giving baby steps to get better each time. And that was built into our team culture and our family of constant improvement. And that way, they wouldn't take it personally or feel like I was nagging them when I gave feedback. And also we add the word "yet."

So when they are learning something and they're not good at it, or I do this too when I'm learning a new skill and I'm not good at it, any time we say we're not good at something, we always add the word "yet" at the end of the sentence, leaving the thing open that we're going to get better at it. And also reminding my kids that when something is hard, that is the feeling of a skill...of growing, of getting better, that that resistance is often the friction leading to a positive change, so not avoiding things when things get hard, and just always like phrasing these things as areas of growth versus things that they had to do.

Tip number 14. Cultivate unstructured play and stop entertaining. And this is another area that I had to learn to make some major changes in. I think modern moms, we feel the pressure to structure and oversee every moment of our kids' lives, and I know I did. When my kids were younger, it was a big source of stress for a long time. I didn't actually even know where this feeling was coming from, but I felt like I should be entertaining them, playing with them, and making sure they were interacted with every moment of every day.

Everything I've talked about over the years, this is now one of the topics that I feel the most strongly about because I think the way we are protecting our kids is actually doing them a severe disservice in life. And the stress of that is really hard on us parents as well. So, I would kind of posit these points that are important to remember because I think unstructured play outside is one of the best things we can do for the kids. And I've had guests on this podcast who talked about that from a vestibular and limbic system perspective, how they need it to develop risk tolerance and to know their boundaries and also even just that outdoor like movement and running and climbing and how that develops the brain. And a lot of parents still have resistance to that. So there's a few important points to know about this.

Statistically and drastically, the world is safer than when we were kids. We had this idea because of the news cycle and constant negativity everywhere that the world is not that safe, but the world is statistically safer than when we were kids. Secondly, supervising kids at all times does not necessarily keep them safe either. Kids can have bad things happen even when we're watching them. Number three, there are long-term negative consequences to over structuring and overprotecting, and we are starting to see the results of this in the generation that's now reaching adulthood. And psychiatrists are worried about this. And four, these over structured, hectic schedules are actually damaging. It can be damaging to families and create more problems. And I've talked about the stress of those for moms in other parts of this podcast.

So when I talk about the world being safer, I'm not just talking about that kids are less likely to die of childhood illness from previous centuries because I think that's the default. People try to think, "Well, yeah, the world is safer because medicine's gotten better so kids are less likely to die from all-cause mortality." And that is somewhat true, but it is statistically also safer for kids today than it ever has been in recorded history. Kids are less likely to die or be kidnapped by...die in an accident or be kidnapped than they ever have before. So despite the fear-mongering in the media, children are less likely to be abducted, harmed, or murdered than ever before. Not only that but kids need unstructured, free play outside for vital aspects of their development.

As I mentioned earlier in this podcast, we won't always be there to protect our kids nor should we be. And I've talked to a lot of friends who are teachers, all the way from grade school through college professors, and they're saying kids are increasingly unable to solve simple problems on their own because parents intervene for everything from grades to discipline problems in school because the stakes feel so high now. And parents are even intervening in like small children having just disputes outside when they're playing, but the result psychologically is a generation of children who still basically need their parents to decorate their dorm room or manage their life or pay their bills. And personally, I don't want six grown-ups who's needing me to do all that for their entire lives.

I totally get that we wanna keep our kids safe and protected, but there's a point when we have to start letting go of some of these things for their health. So thinking about this, there's extremely tiny chance that something bad's gonna happen to our children if they're playing outside. In fact, statistically, if I'm remembering off the top of my head, I think that the number was like kids would have to play outside by themselves in our front yard for 750,000 years on average to actually get kidnapped. That's how rare it is. But on the converse of that, there's a 0% chance of children developing any street smarts by sitting on the couch watching TV. Kids aren't learning problem-solving or creativity by being protected from uncomfortable situations or having their conflicts solved for them.

And so like I look at this, again, a little bit mathematically of like...the pros and the cons and also mathematically, which is the risk-benefit? Where do the numbers fall? We know that kids are on technology more and more, much more so than make sure they're playing on screens more than they ever have, and they're spending more time inside than they ever have. In fact, even in one generation, statistically, kids today

spend less than half the time outside than I did as kids, and we spent more time...less time outside than our parents did. Kids also spend over 50% of their time more looking at screens than they do playing outside.

So, strictly logically, I think this is important because sitting and watching a screen is a sedentary activity. We know childhood obesity is on the rise. But eye doctors, I've interviewed a couple, are seeing vision problems in children at very young ages because of staring at screens for too long. And the blue light of screens are affecting our kids' brains and circadian rhythms, but yet a lot of parents feel it's safer to let our kids watch TV or be on their iPad than to climb a tree or ride a bike, even though climbing a tree, riding a bike, those actually both are important things for developing their right-brain, left-brain for their vestibular system. I did a podcast with Carol of Brain Harmony actually a couple if you wanna check those out of why those things are so important.

Also, I often hear the thing about what about kids and sex trafficking. Just statistically, kids are actually way more likely to be targeted on social media and then later abducted than they are to be grabbed by a random stranger on the street. So this is our area of concern. We actually should be keeping them safe online or keeping them off of technology and not worrying about them playing in the backyard. Kids being outside actually serves also a much more important purpose than just them running around and reducing the risk of obesity, which is huge, but they're getting fresh air.

So, I've talked about before how indoor air is often hundreds of times more polluted than the outdoor air. So being outside is a great way for them to get some clean air. Also, just a few minutes outside every day, kids can get the vitamin D they need for many aspects of help that is statistically tied to reduced cancer risk, to decreased mental health problems, to absorption of other vitamins, to better sleep. It's really super important. Also, them being outside, they're exposed to natural light. Outdoor light is so much brighter than inner light. I mentioned this with why I go outside in the morning every morning, but daytime light exposure, especially in the morning, helps regulate hormones, cortisol, and circadian rhythm. And there are studies especially on children that this can really improve sleep. So our kids need to be outside for the light.

Also, for the sensory input. So I mentioned Carol from Brain Harmony. She's an occupational therapist, who is helping correct a lot of these problems in kids. And she mentions how important like all the normal outside activities are for babies in a lot of ways. So we keep babies upright from the very beginning in high chairs, cribs, playpens. They're not rolling around, moving around. They're not developing their vestibular system like they should be. They're not outside playing in the dirt, so they're not getting the microbial or the sensory input from the grass or from crawling or from falling down, which is actually a very important part of brain development. And what they're seeing over time is that when kids don't get these inputs, they get more anxiety, they're less creative, and they have more problems as older kids when they don't do these things.

So, the lack of vestibular system development is also leading kids to be clumsier, not have as much balance and maybe tied to sensory issues. So, all that to say kids need unstructured play, and they need it outside. And I also think it needs to be unsupervised when it can be. Here's why. So, like I said, we're not letting kids have control of their own lives and figure out how to navigate these things psychologically. Think about when you

were a kid, the things that pushed you just beyond your comfort zone, when you were super scared of taking that job or you were climbing a tree and it got scarier. You didn't think you could do it, and then you did, or the first time you rode a bike or climbed a rope or whatever it was. That's an important feeling of accomplishment for kids, and it teaches them to tackle bigger goals. But we're protecting kids from having these experiences, which makes them more afraid to tackle bigger things later in life.

And another benefit of that unstructured play is that we're not there to rescue them every time they get their feelings hurt. And I know this is hard. As a parent, it's so hard to see your kids get their feelings hurt. None of them like to see them feel bad but they learn so much from these experiences. And in having their feelings hurt or having rough interactions with other kids their age, they learn important lessons like, "Not everyone in the world has the same opinion as me, but I can still get along with people who have a different opinion than I do." And we've probably all met adults who might need to learn that lesson too. They learn things like, "If I'm mean to other kids, they won't wanna play with me. And also they don't have to play with me." And that's an important thing that kids need to understand when the stakes are small, kids, before they're in a job setting, and they're not getting along with coworkers or their boss, they learn things like, "I don't always get to play what I want or choose the activity all the time," that group activities require compromise. Again, another huge life skill as an adult and they learn things like that.

Relationships require the ability to work through conflict and to find compromise and that it's worth it. But when we jump in and we facilitate this kind of intensive mediation for every minor infraction, like talk about our feelings and work them through it, they don't get to figure out how to work those things through on their own. So, I think our overabundance of extracurricular activities and our over-involvement with our kids take away these important things that are needed for childhood development. So that's why I'm a huge fan of unstructured outdoor playtime for kids, and I know that it can be hard.

This is one of the things I prioritize the most in life, and like we actually ended up not building a house we really wanted to build because we had an environment where our kids had this. And that was so important to us. And having this leads to healthier and happier kids, and like I've mentioned all these psychological benefits of doing that. It's also great for moms because then we are free of feeling like we need to entertain them at all times. We're not being bad moms by letting them play outside on their own. That's actually very, very important for them, and they will learn. Like, my kids build forts. They've worked through things with friends. They've created all these games. They play outside constantly. They're getting exercise. They're getting all the benefits of outdoor play, and they're getting the social benefits of working through those things. It's a little bit of a rant on the soapbox there.

Tip number 15. Master your work life. Again, this is another tough area, and it's so different for each of us. So I'm just gonna share some kind of broad, general strategies from my own experience. My work life is extremely probably abnormal. I don't think anything's gonna be directly applicable, so I'm just gonna share some generalities. As a mom, though, I've never liked this idea of work-life balance because there's often no separation. Even at work, we're still thinking about our kids. Even when we're home, we know that there's stuff we need to do at work. We are inherent multitaskers. So, balance is not just a moving target. It's more of a complete myth for moms.

I prefer to think of it work-life integration because we have to operate so many systems at once, all the gears need to turn in the same direction at the same time to keep things moving forward. So, I analyze work in the same type of way that I analyze home stuff, and I make sure that they all integrate well. Me personally, I work from home most days, but I also homeschool and run the household. And though I'm grateful to have grandparents close by who help with school and have an assistant who helps with some business stuff, a lot of it is still up to me. And I realized that as humans, we will fill whatever time slot we give ourselves. So since I had the freedom to largely set my schedule, I had to keep this in mind and plan as such.

I realized that I realistically only had about two to three hours a day of real work time and that I was more effective, much more effective when that time was uninterrupted in a block together. So I started scheduling this when I knew that my kids could be occupied with other tasks like school or when they're outside playing, and I only tackle the most important work stuff during that time. So in other words, when I only have two hours to get stuff done, I can get the same amount that I used to get done in eight hours done because I'm not checking email. I'm not on social media. I'm doing the most effective things that I have to do first.

I also batch whenever possible. So there are things on my list, like, again, my work schedule's not normal, but like podcast recording and writing, I will often stick to one type of activity like that per day and then batch it. So I will record several podcasts in a row or do a writing day. That way my brain can stay on task and tackle those tasks better. I have employed a lot of the strategies above that I talked about in this podcast to make time for work by systematizing stuff I had to get done at home, by making sure my kids had time to play outside or stuff to work on so that I could be uninterrupted the rest of the time.

But like I said, my work is pretty unusual. I don't have a normal job with set hours. So, I'm not sure my specific system would be helpful, but a couple things that I think are universally applicable would be only check email at certain times. Don't even have it notify you the rest of the time and handling all of them at once. So I have short 20 minutes segments when I check email and Slack, and I don't check it the rest of the time. I also think it's really beneficial to have systems and standard operating procedures for everything, both at home and at work. This way I can delegate when needed, and it takes all the memory and stress out of it.

And then tip number 16 is to master your mind. And this may be the toughest step, but for me, this has been...it's made the biggest difference. It took the longest and I'm still very much a work in progress. But you might have heard that joking quote online, "It's like no one even appreciates that I stayed up all night worrying about them." But the mom guilt is real, and the worry is real. And I think this is something that all of us face to some degree. This was also the last one I was able to tackle effectively. My house was managed, we had systems, we had minimized, I had systems for my kitchen, for work, but cleaning out my mind was the toughest step in it. Like I said, it's still a work in progress.

To me, it goes back to the quote from Seneca, "There's only one way to happiness, and that is to cease worrying about things that are beyond the power of our will." And there's a lot in that one sentence. It's easy

to say, it's incredibly tough to do, but it's also so freeing if you can do it. And it's definitely not a change you can make overnight. In this one I had like over time, it took me probably a year before I actually noticed a really drastic change in this.

It's actually easier to think of the things that are in our control than to list the things that are not in our control. And if we boil it down, the only thing we really have control over is our own character and our own response to things that happen. We can't control anything else. There's another quote from Epictetus, who I think this also really applies to moms, is that man is not worried by real problems so much as by his imagined anxieties about real problems.

And this idea that we only are in charge of our own reactions and our own will is wonderful because it gives us control. But it's also a big responsibility when we realize that all emotions and all stress comes from within because it's so easy to wanna look for an outside source to blame. But outside forces don't and can't control our feelings. So knowing this releases us from a lot of stress when we pay attention to it and manage it. We can't control how others feel about us. So we have to learn how to let that go. We can't control the actions of others, even our kids. So we have to let that go. We can't control or change the past. So we have to let that go.

We can't control or change the weather or the possibility of some horrific event or any other outside factor. All we can control are our own thoughts and emotions, and we can gain incredible freedom when we really focus on that. Again, I get it, easier said than done. Like I said, this took the longest, but some practical things that really helped me.

Every single day, focusing on gratitude. So I love to start each day thinking of things I am grateful for, and I think, in general, gratitude is the antidote to a lot of worry and stress. And so I actually make a list of these things either in my phone or in a journal, just jotting down a few things over time that's helped my brain switch into looking for the good versus looking for the negative. And once your brain makes that switch, all of this gets so much easier.

I think it's also important to find the things that reduce stress physically because when we're under physical stress, mentally, we stress much more as well. Like the things I've talked about earlier in this podcast, when I was able to optimize exercise and sleep and supplements, that made a difference for my mindset as well.

Also, learning to distinguish the difference between problem-solving and worrying. So I started paying attention and asking myself if a certain thought pattern was productive and was gonna lead to a good outcome which is problem-solving or if I was just worrying. And if I was just worrying and this thought process was not gonna actually lead to solving the problem, then I would interrupt it. I would do something that I needed to do to change it to stop that train of thought. I would either read something else to change my thoughts, go move, go outside, and come back with a fresh perspective. That way I wasn't wasting mental energy if I wasn't gonna solve a problem and it was just gonna make me stressed.

And then I also learned to do something called fear-setting, which Tim Ferriss talks about, and then let go. So rather than worry about all the bad things that could happen, I would actually think them through to their worst-case scenario and then think about what would happen if I had to face that. So, in many cases, the worst-case scenario wasn't actually that bad, and I would be able to manage it just fine. And certainly, there are things that would be like much more difficult and seem unsurmountable like the loss of a loved one or some kind of huge disaster. But I knew I couldn't control those things and that worrying about them wasn't going to stop them from happening.

So I went back to focusing on gratitude and being present with the people I loved in the moment. Like I said, this is still a daily work in progress for me, but over time, my mindset has so much shifted from focusing on the negative to trying to focus on the positive. And I'm able to let go of the things that are not in my control, and I'm so much less mentally stressed.

And then lastly, tip number 17. All of this points toward finding your own way and taking baby steps. And if I've learned one thing in the last 13 years of motherhood and in this process, it's that what works for one person won't always work the same for another. It took me years to find my own versions of all of these things. And I've shared specifics in the hopes that they will help you. But at the end of the day, we each have to create our own systems based on our own schedules, our own lives, and things that would work.

So I would say based on my experience, start with small, little baby steps that are manageable and that you know you can integrate over time and integrate them before you add more things on. So rather than try to overhaul your entire life in one day, start with you find those 80/20, find the 20% most effective and start there. Make sure that you're getting enough sleep. If meals and food is a big stress, start with that. If it's laundry, figure out the thing that's gonna take away the most stress from you and start there.

I also think, and you hear me say this all the time, but that community is a huge aspect of any change. So find a group of friends or support and have that. That'll help your mental state, that'll help your stress level, and that will also help you stick to this if you have accountability. I've heard it said that we are the sum of the five people we spend the most time with. So I think we need to choose these people wisely and then nurture relationships that help us become better and that we can help them become better as well. So I hope that some of the things in that were helpful.

As always, thank you for listening. If you have any follow-up questions, please post them in the show notes. That's always at [wellnessmama.fm](https://wellnessmama.fm). I will try to answer them. And this is a topic I'm going to be writing about more and more and talking about more on this podcast. So if you enjoyed, just leave questions there, and I will try to address any follow up ones in future episodes. Also, if you enjoyed this episode or any episode, I would be very grateful if you would leave an honest rating or review in whatever app you use to listen, whether that's iTunes, Spotify, etc. This helps others to find the podcast and it helps with rankings. But as always, thank

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