



Episode 328: How to Live Fearlessly and Work Through Roadblocks with Rhonda Britten

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is sponsored by UpSpring Baby, a company making innovative science-backed products for moms and babies. And I want to tell you about one of their products in particular because even though I'm not even currently pregnant or have tiny babies, it's been really helpful to me. I really like their Stomach Settle nausea relief drops, which are great for any kind of stomach upset from motion sickness, which I get, and a couple of my daughters get, to morning sickness, which I thankfully do not have right now because I'm not pregnant, but any kind of bloating or digestive upset at all. I love to keep this on hand and my kids like them too. They help relieve nausea, motion sickness, gas, bloating, and any kind of digestive upset. In fact, I keep these in my car, in my kind of like emergency kit in each of my cars, and also in my purse just to have on hand because tummy aches can be a thing when out and on-the-go. Their lemon-ginger-honey flavored Stomach Settle drops contain not just one but three natural remedies for digestive upset: ginger, spearmint, and lemon. Plus, they contain vitamin B6 to help relieve occasional nausea, motion sickness, gas and bloating. Their ingredients are micronized, meaning that they provide faster-acting relief, and they have been really helpful, like I said, especially for motion sickness. They're individually wrapped. They're great for on-the-go, and I was able to negotiate a discount just for you. You can check this out at upspringbaby.com/pages/wellnessmama, and the code `wellness10` saves you 10%.

This episode is sponsored by Beekeeper's Naturals, which is my go-to source for all things bee-related. If you're not familiar with them, they're an amazing company. They make clean remedies that really work and that my whole family loves to take, no fight required. I'm sure you probably know that bees are absolutely vital to our global food system. And Beekeeper's Naturals is on a mission to save the bees while creating products that support humans as well. They source all of their bee products sustainably and do a lot to support healthy bee colonies. All of their products, of course, are gluten-free, non-GMO, naturally-sourced, and keto-friendly. My personal favorite is their propolis spray which I use for natural immune support. I never have to fight my kids to take it because it tastes delicious and it's my first line of defense at any sign of sniffles or cough or any time I'm traveling. I also really love their B.LXR Brain Fuel, which is a caffeine-free way to support focus and energy. I take this on days like today with podcasting when I need a little extra mental boost. As a listener of this podcast, you can save 15% on all Beekeeper's Naturals products. Go to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama, and the code "wellnessmama" saves you 15%.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and I think you're really going to enjoy today's guest as we delve into the mental and the emotional side of health. I'm here with Emmy Award winning Rhonda Britten, who is a repeat Oprah guest and has worked with thousands of people in her program of what she calls "Fearless Living." She has one of the most amazing stories I've heard, both in her own personal transformation and what she went through in her life, and now in what she does to help, like I said, thousands and thousands of people. And in this episode, we go deep on how you can move through fear in your personal life, and also when it's widespread and societal like it is right now for many people. And she gives really practical tips and starting points for how you can shift your inner voice and

your inner fears, and use them to your advantage in life rather than fighting them. So without further ado, let's learn from Rhonda.

Rhonda, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Rhonda: I am so excited to be here talking about my very favorite subject, fear.

Katie: Well, I think it's a very timely subject right now. There's a lot of uncertainty still going around right now and I think there couldn't be a more pertinent time to talk about this and probably, I'm excited to hear from you and to get tips from you and I hope that it will help many people listening as well. But as background, I would love to hear a little bit of your story and how you became this voice of fearless living and helping so many thousands of people.

Rhonda: Thank you. Well, you know, it wasn't... I think most of us who are now dedicated to supporting people, to helping people, to guiding people, to helping them move through whatever they're moving through, right, and me specifically fearless living/fear is because I lived in fear most of my life, but I didn't know it. And I think that's a real key point, Katie. I think most people don't walk around saying, "I'm afraid," or "I'm scared." Maybe right now they're actually admitting it more than normal. But most of us don't walk around saying, "I'm afraid," or "I'm scared." And I didn't either.

And you know, I did, you know, a lot of different, you know, read books, took workshops, did at a whole bunch of things to change my life, but they really didn't get me over the feeling that there's something wrong with me. And, you know, you asked the question like, how did it really all start? Well, you know, if I really look back on where did this begin, it was when I was 14 years old. And, you know, my favorite book at the time was, "Why am I Afraid to Tell you who I am," which I find completely ironic that now I teach people how to not be afraid to be who they are, right?

But it was on Father's Day. My parents were recently separating and I, you know, my father was coming over to take us to brunch, which, you know, there's three kids, two adults, five people. We didn't really go out to dinner or lunch or brunch ever. So this was a big special event. And my father comes in, "Come on, come on." My sisters are in the bathroom fighting it out. I have two sisters. We lived in about an 850-square-foot house. And my mom and I start walking out with my dad, my sisters still in the bathroom fighting it out, and my dad looks at me and says, "I've got to get my coat from the car." And so he opens his trunk to grab his coat. But instead of grabbing his coat, he grabbed a gun and he started screaming at my mother, "You made me do this. You made me do this." And I start screaming, "What are you doing, dad? What are you doing?" And he shoots my mother and I am frozen, right? I don't know what to do. I'm frozen. And my father cocks the gun and points it at me. And I absolutely believe I'm next. And my father looks at me. I look at him, and like, we're like literally eyeball to eyeball and you know, he blinks, I blink, and I'm just waiting. I'm just waiting for the bullet.

And in my mother's literal last breath, she sees that gun in my face and screams, "No, stop." And my father realizing my mother's still alive, takes that bullet intended for me and shoots my mother a second time. And that second bullet goes through my mother's abdomen, out her back and lands in the car horn. And so for the next 20 minutes, all I heard was BEEEEEP. And then my father cocks the gun again and he drops to his knees, puts the gun to his head and fires.

So in two minutes, I was the sole witness of watching my father murder my mother and commit suicide in front of me. And I don't know how other people would respond, but basically, how I responded was...I mean, I didn't do anything to stop my father from killing my mother. You know, I blamed myself. I didn't grab the gun. I did nothing heroic. I didn't kick him in the knees. I didn't jump in front of my mother. I did no superhero stuff. I just stood there frozen saying, "Stop, stop," right? And in that moment, I basically split in two, Katie. You know, half of me was, you know, "I'm fine, I'm fine. I'm a straight-A student. I'll still be a straight-A student and I'll pretend all of this didn't happen." And then the other part of me just had so much guilt and shame.

And, you know, when you witness your father murdering your mother, you don't get to be happy ever again. Like I just really resigned myself that I don't ever get to be happy. And so for the next 20 years, I tried to kill myself three times. I became an alcoholic. I got three DUIs. And you know, it was that third suicide attempt that I realized I'm not very good at killing myself and I've gotta figure out another way. And I remember going back to my little tiny studio apartment after that third suicide attempt, realizing, "Well, if I'm not gonna die, I better figure out how to live."

And, you know, during those 20 years of alcoholism and nightmares and, you know, etc., etc., and suicide attempts, I did read books and I did go to workshops and I did go to therapy. I did everything one would think they should do. But like I shared earlier, there was this overwhelming feeling that there was still something really fundamentally wrong with me.

And so when I went to that little studio apartment after my third suicide attempt, I remember saying to myself, "Like, if I'm not dying, I've gotta figure out how to live and I've gotta figure this out." And so I started making up exercises for myself. And I just wanna say this, Katie, I was not proud of myself for doing this. I thought I was so screwed up that I had to make stuff up for myself. So I was really ashamed that I had to do this. And the good news, though, those exercises started to work for me, started to shift my mindset, started to shift the way I saw the world, started to heal me, started to move me into the direction of what's now called Fearless Living.

So what I teach today is just an extension, and of course, an expansion, because now I've been doing it for 25 years, of what I started that moment when had to decide, you know, "Rhonda, you can't keep going this way. You have to make a decision and you have to decide to live. You have to decide to thrive. You have to decide to become the person you were born to be." And that was the, you know, the germination, the first seed that started like...you know, again, it took many, many years to, you know, offer this to the public or even think I could do it. I mean, I was...it took me many years before...you know, from the moment I started creating the exercises to actually thinking that they could help anyone but me.

But that was the moment, you know. I really do think that... I do really do think that somehow this is, you know, a life's, you know, commitment by me and my parents to move the world to see fear differently through our experience and then through my being alive and trying to figure it out for myself and me admitting that I'm afraid. Because again, for most of my life, even after that happened, I never admitted I was afraid. So when I started understanding how fear worked, everything changed for me, Katie. Everything changed. And that was the beginning of a new life, a beginning of being able to be happy, a beginning of, you know, peace of mind, a beginning of, you know, self-esteem and self-worth and self-confidence and self-acceptance and everything that I'd always yearned for.

Katie: Wow. I know every time I hear your story, it just gives me goosebumps and it's so incredible to hear what you've overcome and what you faced, which is so much more than many people think they'll ever have to face. And I think that's so inspiring, on the one hand. Then I think another reaction you maybe get, I'm curious if you do, but is people who haven't had to go through something as difficult as that saying, you know, "I'm not walking around with that level of having gone through something or that level of fear. So do I really need to actually address this? Like do I need fearless living if I haven't had to face something that horrific?"

Rhonda: Yeah, I think that's a great question, Katie. And you know, my motto is, you know, "Fear is fear is fear," and every single person alive has fear whether they know it or not. And they do because it's part of our neurobiology. So, whether it's, you know, fear of rejection, fear of failure. Because, you know, we're talking about when my father took that gun out, you know, that's called fear of survival, fear of living. Like, you know, I'm gonna die, right? So, most of us don't understand the difference between a physical fear and an emotional fear. And we really don't kind of give credence to emotional fears most of us. But physical fears of, you know, being shot or, you know, rape or something horrific, you know, most of the time, for most people, knock on wood, they don't have to experience that on a daily basis.

Their physical fear is not what they're experiencing. But what they are experiencing most days is an emotional fear. Like, "Do I start my own business?" Well, that decision probably is being decided by fear more than we'd like to admit and more than we're probably aware of because it sounds like a rational, practical, like, "Well, no. It's not a good time to do that," you know, or whether we move or whether we fall in love or whether we leave or any of the decisions that we have to make most of the time, unless we're really clear, really clear and understand how fear works, fear is making too many of our decisions for us, again, under the guise of rationale or practical or, "It's the best thing to do," or again, "This is the best thing my mother would tell me to do," etc., etc.

So, you know, I pray that nobody has to experience what I do and I pray that nobody has to experience horrific circumstances. But what I do know from the people that I've worked with, whether it's a minister, whether it's a stay-at-home mom, whether it's a CEO, doesn't matter, everybody has, whether they're aware to it or not, fear because again, it's part of our neurobiology. It's part of the way our brain works. It's part of the way our body works. So unless you understand it, most people get confused by it and they actually believe the signals of fear rather than believe their own true nature, you know, follow their own path.

Katie: Wow. Yeah. I think that's such a beautiful description. And I know another objection you probably hear relatively often and certainly that I held on to and hid behind for a lot of number of years is the idea that some fear is good and that, you know, fear can keep us safe. I even hear people teach their kids that of like, you know, "You wanna be afraid of strangers and snakes and whatever it may be because that keeps you safe." And so I'm curious, what do you say to people who try to argue, you know, why do we wanna get rid of fears, don't we wanna hold on to them?

Rhonda: Well first of all, you can't get rid of fear. So that's impossible. It's part of our neurobiology. So there's no getting rid of fear. But there is transcending fear. There is befriending fear. There is mastering fear. But there's no getting rid of it. So if anyone ever says to you, "Oh, get rid of this fear for good," it's like they'd have to give you a lobotomy, right? Like that's not possible, right? So it is about working through your fear. Now, when you hear parents and, you know, "Watch as you cross the street," and, you know, "Don't eat that, that's really bad for you," or "You have an allergy," or you know any of those things, that's actually a physical survival fear.

And if I'm in an elevator and I'm feeling freaked out or get an intuitive hit that I should get out, yeah, get out. Right? And yeah, do I wanna go bungee jumping? Not so much, right? So there's a big difference between physical fears, you know, what our parents usually tell us, right? Like, you know, watch out for traffic. Be careful, right? They wanna keep us safe. They wanna keep us alive. But where the problem comes in is because the brain doesn't know the difference between an emotional fear and a physical fear, those same fears are kind of handed down emotionally as well. So that fear of walking across the street turns into fear of taking risks, a fear of falling in love, a fear of connecting, a fear of telling the truth, a fear of sharing a secret, a fear of being intimate, a fear of starting my own business, a fear of moving, right?

So those physical fears that we're taught again, out of the goodness of our parents' heart and our community's heart, and of course we want to stay physically safe. But again, what it does is it actually translates into an emotional fear. And so those emotional fears, that fear of rejection, that fear of loss, that fear of intimacy, that fear of success, that fear of failure, that fear of being inadequate, that fear of looking stupid, the fear of fearing being lazy, the fear of, you know, being a loser, right? I could go on and on. Those fears subtly, you know, quietly, insidiously, impact our thinking. And again, this is all from our neurobiology, from our brain. It's not something that, you know, I made up in the middle of the night and just, you know, it's not scientific-base. It's like, no, no, no, no. This is our neurobiology and our neurobiology, the brain, doesn't know the difference between a physical fear and an emotional fear. The brain doesn't know the difference between something you make up versus what's real. So you walk into a networking meeting or you go to a party and you say, "These aren't my people," you I bet manufactured that, you know, and you call it intuition. But you manufactured that because of your neurobiology of fear.

So the brain doesn't know the difference between physical and emotional, doesn't know the difference between real and imagined. What they're now discovering is that fear, many times, is handed down through our DNA. So some of the things that you are afraid of actually came from your great, great grandmother,

right? And the other thing we know about fear is that there's no getting rid of it, right? There's no getting rid of it. So you wanna learn how to work with it. You wanna understand its purpose so that you no longer get stopped by it, so that you know how fear sounds versus freedom sounds. You know the difference between fear and love. You know the difference between, you know, fear of, you know, being, you know, your authentic self versus really living in the risk of being your authentic self.

Like, you know the difference so you can walk in a life that really suits you, that really is your life to live and not let fear decide for you because fear is subtle, insidious. It knows everything you know. It's as smart as you are, educated as you are, spiritual as you are, as knowledgeable as you are. So it uses everything that you know against you. Get more spiritual, it gets more spiritual. So again, there's a big difference between people thinking that fear is just a physical fear when really, the day-to-day living that we go through, our emotional fears are actually deciding too much of our life, not our physical fears.

Katie: So then if we can't get rid of fear, which makes total sense, you mentioned we have to learn to work with it or to make it good for us. So walk us through what are the first steps of that? Because that seems like an overwhelming process.

Rhonda: Yeah, well it's just easier than you think because, of course, that's what I've been doing for 25 years and I know that I needed an easy process, right? Like, I couldn't have anything complicated, right? Like, I needed ABC. In order to live it every day, I need ABC. And so I created something called the Wheel of Fear and the Wheel of Freedom. And the Wheel of Fear and Wheel of Freedom have four parts each. But I wanna focus on a couple of parts just to start getting people on the pathway.

So the Wheel of Fear has something called Fear Responses. Okay. So for instance, you know, we all kind of know what we think our problems are, right? Like most of us can like, name our problems. You know, procrastination, perfectionism, I get anxious, overwhelmed, you know. So we kind of know like, "Oh, I compare. I compete. You know, I feel guilty. I get worried." Like, we know. "You know, I people-please. You know, I give too much. I'm just somebody who gives." So we all probably know some of the ways that fear actually is influencing us right now. And what we do, Katie, is we call them our problems, or we call them our character flaws, or we say that they're our character defects, or we say that's what we're bad about, or that's our problem, you know, beating ourselves up, etc., making excuses, complaining, etc.

So the first thing that I want to give people relief from is those are just fear responses. So your procrastination, your perfectionism, you're overwhelmed, you're complaining, you're feeling guilty, you're worried, comparing, again, beating yourself up. All of those things are the way that our neurobiology has created a, you know, kind of a way to keep ourselves safe, from an emotional standpoint. And the way that it's tricked us is that we think those are our problems, right? We think procrastination is our problem. And in fact, procrastination is just a symptom, a fear response to a deeper fear.

So if you can really start seeing like, "Oh, you mean my overeating isn't because I'm lazy?" No, it's not because you're lazy. No, it's actually you're over-eating because there's a fear driving that overeating. "Oh, you mean procrastination is not that I'm lazy?" No, it's not. Procrastination isn't because you're lazy. Procrastination, again, is a fear response to a deeper, deeper fear.

So we wouldn't complain if we didn't have a fear. We wouldn't get overwhelmed if we didn't have a fear. We wouldn't feel guilty if we didn't have a fear. We wouldn't worry if we didn't have a fear. So all the things that we think are our problems, you know, 3 things, 10 things, 20 things, are actually a symptom of one thing and that is what I call the core fear, that trigger that really ignites all of those fear responses. So one of the first things, Katie, people can do is actually write down all the ways they trip themselves up, all the ways they trick themselves, all the way the problems that they think they have. So, you know, spend some time and just go, "Okay, yeah, I procrastinate. Yup. Yup. I get overwhelmed. Yup. Yup. I get anxious. Yep. I am a perfectionist. Yep. I try. I'm a control freak. Yep." And just write them down.

Start owning that, "Okay, these are the ways that I respond when I'm in fear." And what I want everyone to hear right now is that, you are not your wheel of fear. You are not your wheel of fear. You are not with your wheel fear. And all of those fear responses were honed and created, again, through our DNA, but also, you know, from our family, from our life experience, from, you know, who we hung out with. And the wheel of fear was formed by the time you were five. So, you know, you're not stupid, lazy, ignorant, inadequate, etc, or worthless. You know, you're just having a fear that you don't know what to do with. So you've created a way to manage it through procrastination, overwhelm, guilt, shame, etc., etc.

So the first thing to do, Katie, is just to start writing down some of the things that you do and start really noticing and knowing that these are not character flaws, there's nothing wrong with you. And if I could say one thing to everybody, it's like there's nothing wrong with you. There's nothing wrong with you. There's nothing wrong with you. It's just fear. So I think that's one of the easiest things to start doing is just starting to notice them. And then, of course, you know, I work with clients and, of course, in my book and workshops, etc., I help people identify that core fear that they have that really drives all these behaviors.

And the number one thing that people experience when they understand what their core fear is, because your core fear is probably not fear of failure. It's probably not fear of success, probably not fear of rejection. Those are all really probably fear responses. But when you identify that core fear, what I hear from people over and over again is my life makes sense. I understand why I've done everything I've done and a level of peace of mind comes in because now you know, it's not you. You're not a bad person. You're not a stupid person. You're not a lazy person. You're not an...you know, there's not something wrong with you. It's actually an individualized fear that was created by the time you were five. And so we're just acting it out at the age of 30, 40, 50 because it's worked on some level. It's kept us safe on some level. And so, you know, the fear wants to do one thing and one thing only and it just wants to keep us safe. And we've bought into that because we don't know any difference, right?

So again, the first thing that I would invite people to do is just start recognizing the things that they do and start labeling them different. Instead of, "These are my problems," go, "These are my fear responses. This is how I respond when I'm afraid. These are not character flaws. I'm not bad because I do these things. These are just things that I do automatically because that's how I've been trained to respond to fear. But there is a different way."

Katie: That makes so much sense. And I experienced that myself over the last couple of years working through some past experiences. And there was this kind of profound moment of realizing that some of these things that I was so angry with myself over and that I wasn't getting past, realizing they had protected me in a lot of ways at certain times and helped me even to become who I am now and that they were...and like basically moving from a point of, like, frustration with myself and fear about these things, to a place of gratitude that my mind and my body knew what to do to protect me and then being able to say, "But I don't need you to keep me safe in this way anymore."

And so I'm curious what is the next step? Like, once we're able to identify that, I would guess there's a tremendous amount of self-compassion that comes just from being able to realize this is not a deficiency. I'm not, you know, not good because of this." But what's the next step of then making that our friend and moving forward?

Rhonda: Well, there's something called the Wheel of Fear like I mentioned, and then the Wheel of Freedom. And what I help people do is, again, like I said, identify their core fear, but more importantly, I help them identify their pathway out. You know, we hear a lot about mental models and filtering systems. And neuroscience says now that the only way to truly change your life on a core level is to change how you filter the world. Literally, change the glasses you wear. Literally, start seeing the world differently. And that's what the Wheel of Fear and Wheel of Freedom do. You move from the Wheel of Fear filter to the Wheel of Freedom filter.

Now, I do wanna give a caveat here, Katie, that, you know, I know that people probably are walking around 80% fearless, right? Some people are 20% fearless, but there's some areas of our life where we're already doing this naturally. You know, we are fearless naturally, but there's other areas of life that fear does have its way with us. So we might be fearless in career, but fearful in relationships, and all of our anxiety comes up, all of our worry comes up. Or it might be different and opposite. Like, "Oh, my God, my relationships are awesome. I'm really able to communicate and intimate, but it's my career where I get all caught up in money and worth and oh, you know, making money and oh, what do I do?"

And some of us are great in those areas and have difficult time with self-care and play and connection, right? So I'm not implying that everybody is afraid everywhere, but I want you to, first of all, to really name the area that you do have some fear and that you do doubt yourself, that you do put yourself down, that you do compare yourself to others. I think that's really important to start giving yourself credit for the things that you already have "handled," and areas that you're like, "Okay, fear responses are totally running the show," right?

So I help people find what's called their essential nature of the place that they can anchor back into their true nature. So I help people shift their filtering system from the Wheel of Fear to the Wheel of Freedom. Now, you brought up a word that is called gratitude. And I love that you brought that up, Katie, because I also wanna not only talk about gratitude for a minute, but I wanna talk about something called acknowledgments. And these are two exercises that folks can do immediately that will start shifting their opinions of themselves and the opinions of the world. So, you know, Katie, you brought up gratitude and I always say people that have a difficult time with gratitude, blame the world.

So if you have a difficult time with gratitude and you have a difficult time saying like, "I'm grateful for," then you probably are blaming the world. Now, acknowledgments, in the world of Fearless Living, which I'll explain how to do one, is if you have a difficult time acknowledging yourself, then you blame yourself, right? So that's the way fear has its way with you is you blame yourself. So in the world of Fearless Living, Katie gratitude, you write out, "Today I'm grateful for..." and you get really specific. And, you know, so you don't write "Today, I'm grateful for the blue sky." You write, "Today, I'm grateful for the way the daisies, you know, are popping up through the, you know, broken sidewalk," right? Like you're really specific because when you are specific with your gratitudes and acknowledgments, it creates a visceral experience.

Well, what is a visceral experience? It means it's alive in your body and it actually starts shifting you automatically of how you see the world. It shifts your filtering system. So we don't want this to be an intellectual exercise. We want this to be a visceral one. And how do you get visceral? Being specific, also not saying "not". So like instead of saying, "You know, I'm really..." or I'll use acknowledgment, "I acknowledge myself for not complaining," uh-uh. We wanna talk in acknowledgments about what we are doing instead of what we're not doing. So, "I acknowledged myself for not complaining," uh-uh. That's what you're not doing. What are you doing instead of complaining? Oh, "I acknowledge myself for giving myself a break when it came to missing a deadline at work," right? Like, acknowledging yourself.

So, "Today, I'm grateful for..." write it out five times a day. Be as specific as you can be. No nots, and acknowledgments are, "Today, I acknowledge myself, acknowledge myself for any shift, any awareness, any movement forward, anything at all." So I wanna say a caveat here, Katie, that I don't care how well somebody does something, right? I could give a crap about how well you do it and I could give a crap about if you finish it or not. Acknowledgments are only about movement forward no matter how minute, no matter how small, no matter how difficult it was. It doesn't matter about any of those. It's just really acknowledging yourself.

And acknowledging that movement forward, actually, is the number one confidence builder, number one way to build your confidence overnight is just starting to acknowledge yourself. Because, Katie, what I've recognized is that most people acknowledged themselves for like one second and then they point out like, "Well, if I would've started sooner," or "Well, I could have done it better," or "Well..." and they literally take away their movement forward by now evaluating it and judging it, how it could have been if they would have only done A, B and C.

Now, it doesn't mean that you can't have discernment and get better, but you first have to acknowledge where you've come from. So gratitudes and acknowledgments are critical tools to use to start shifting your fear responses into what we call the Wheel of Freedom, start moving you forward from fear to freedom. So do your gratitudes about the world. Gratitudes are outside of yourself. They're about the world out there, and acknowledgments are all about you, about how you're living in this world and how you're moving forward. If you do five gratitudes and five acknowledgments today, I'm gonna tell you right now that within 24 hours, 36 hours, you're gonna start seeing a different world and experiencing a different world.

So I'm not gonna tell you what not to do. I'm not gonna say, "Quit complaining," that, for most of us, is difficult to do, right? Instead, we're gonna talk about what we're going to do instead of complaining, what we're gonna do instead of beating ourselves up, what we're gonna do instead. And we're gonna start moving towards who we want to be, what's our true nature, where we wanna go, rather than focusing on what we should stop doing. So we wanna start shifting that, you know, that viewpoint of self-help, personal development, spirituality, etc., from stopping to starting, to where do we wanna go versus, you know, don't focus on what you want to stop, instead focus on replacing. Does that make sense?

Katie: It does. I think that's probably such a powerful and paradigm shift, you know, that we...and when you can make that, I can only imagine how that will spill over into every other area of life. And I'm guessing there's an element here. It makes me think of... I know patterns I can say I've fallen into in the past and that I have seen in other people, which is when people tend to fall into patterns of complaining or making excuses, which you touched on. So I'm curious both if we can recognize in ourselves that that's a thing that we do, how we can work through that, or if that's something that those close to us do. Is there anything we can do both to help our own mindset or to help them in those instances?

Rhonda: Well, complaining, you know, one of the great things is, you know, complaining we do for many reasons and what I'd love people to do is complain, turn complaining into venting. And, you know, most of us have heard the word venting, but in actuality, we're actually complaining, we're not venting. So let me tell you the difference between complaining and venting. And then I'll give you a little language for those people in your life that are big complainers and you no longer wanna participate, what do you say to them? Right? So complaining is, "I'm committed to keeping the problem alive." Like I'm complaining, I'm trying to get you to buy in that there's a problem and I want to focus on the problem.

So I wanna keep talking about the problem. I wanna keep talking about my husband being this way or my boss being that way, or my coworker being this way, or my sister being this way. And I wanna complain about this and complain about that. And I want you to buy in. I want you to buy in because that's how we feel, you know, that we're right. That's how we feel loved, right? That's how we feel understood. Which brings me to a side note, Katie, is that most people wanna be understood. And what I teach my clients, what I teach my students, is most of us want to be understood, but we don't really...we're not really looking for understanding. What we're really looking for is agreement.

So one of the ways that complaining works for us, is we're really looking for agreement. We're not looking to be understood. We don't want...because we think, "Well, if you really understood me, you would agree with me." But it's like that, you know, the fear wants us to get agreement so that we're safe because if we don't agree, then maybe I'm not safe, right? So just FYI, you know, complaining is committed to the problem. So now what is venting? Venting is committed to the solution, i.e., "I have a lot of anger right now. I'm really frustrated right now. I'm feeling really, you know, POed right now I'm really upset about something."

Well, we wanna move that energy because we are basically energy beings. That's what we are. That's what, you know, neuroscience now tells us, that our whole being, our whole neurobiology and our whole biology is actually to keep our energy in place, to keep us having energy, right? And we have to monitor our energy. And making decisions takes energy. That's why we just make the same decisions, even though we think we're making different ones, but they're kind of the same. They're still out of fear because it just saves energy.

So venting actually says, "You know what? I'm a little upset right now and I need to move this energy through me. So I'm gonna honor this feeling of upset, of anger, of whatever, by speaking it out loud to somebody I trust or, you know, yelling in the clouds or, again, however you wanna move it through you. But I'm also committed to moving through it and to find a solution." So venting is, "I know I'm awake to being upset. I know I need to move it through me. So I'm gonna call up a good friend and say, "Hey, by the way, can I just... I'm really upset about something. Will you listen? Don't, you know, give me advice. Don't tell me what to do. Don't tell me I'm right. You know, just listen because I need to move through this so I can think clearly so that I now can come up with a solution."

So most of us are not venting to each other. We're complaining to each other and getting...trying to get buy-in to validate our thoughts, to validate that life isn't fair, to validate that we're victims, that it's not our fault, right? But instead, we wanna take that feeling and move it through us by honoring it, by saying it, writing it, speaking it, you know, going, you know, to the river and throwing things in it, whatever we wanna do to let it move through us. But knowing that we are committed to move through it so that we can be clear to make a different decision. We know this isn't real. The fear isn't real, per se. The anger isn't real. Even though it feels real, we go, "I know I'm angry right now, but I know ultimately, I'm not committed to keeping my anger alive. I'm committed to moving through my anger."

And so then we allow that to move through. And then we can have a venting partner. Again, you can call up a friend, and then when you vent, it's like you can breathe and go, "Okay, whew, I got that. I got through that. I might have to do it a few times, but I moved through it. And now I can think clearly to make a different decision that's based on my values, based on my wheel of freedom, based on who I really want to be, based on the decisions that really support me, that really are who I really am at my core." Instead of being angry and doing things that we're not proud of after we do them, right? That we're just so angry that we lash out, that we, you know, do things that were just like, "God, I wish I didn't do that afterwards," right?

So that's really important to take that complaining and turning it into venting. So we honor our feelings, we honor our feelings, but we act on our commitments. So we honor our feelings, but we act on our

commitments. So that's the thing about complaining. Move it to venting. And also, of course, then we use gratitude after that. So we go from complaining, move it into venting, and then move into gratitude.

Excuses are a little bit more difficult, Katie, than complaining because excuses feel really real, right? Like I can use, "Well, my father killed my mother as an excuse," right? Like, "Wow, that's why I became an alcoholic." And everybody goes, "Well, of course, you would," right? So excuses...complaining, we can kind of call each other out. But excuses are really based on a seed of truth that we then take into reality and actually make real even more, right? So excuses are a little bit more difficult to suss out because we have evidence for those excuses that we should be cautious, that we should...this should...this is real, right? So I think complaining, again, is easier to identify and excuses again, have that seed of truth that we have a difficult time calling ourselves out for.

So I mean that's when we get to do the real truthful, authentic work, about the difference between, "Okay, wait a minute, I'm making an excuse. And do I want that to continue to be my reality?" Like asking ourselves, "Okay, so yes, my father killed my mother and killed himself. Got it. So did that cause a lot of pain? Yes. Did that cause self-doubt? Yes. Self-Hatred, all those... Yes it did. But do I want to keep believing that?" You actually have to decide, Katie, do you want to keep believing that or do you want to decide something different? Do you want to decide that this is, like you said a minute ago about, "Okay, this is a lesson. this is a blessing. This is a gratitude. Like, oh my God, this happened and now I get to do this with it."

So I think excuses are more subtle and they're more, you know, difficult to kind of call out. But I think that if we kind of embrace that there are times in our lives, all of our lives, that we are victims of our excuses, the more gentle we can be with ourselves, the more compassion we can give. And the more than we can call ourselves out and say, "You know what? This excuse no longer serves me. I'm gonna shift it. I'm gonna move into acknowledgment. I'm gonna move into different... I'm gonna see this differently. I'm gonna move past this."

Katie: I love that.

This episode is sponsored by UpSpring Baby, a company making innovative science-backed products for moms and babies. And I wanna tell you about one of their products in particular because even though I'm not even currently pregnant or have tiny babies, it's been really helpful to me. I really like their Stomach Settle nausea relief drops, which are great for any kind of stomach upset from motion sickness, which I get, and a couple of my daughters get, to morning sickness. which I thankfully do not have right now because I'm not pregnant, but any kind of bloating or digestive upset at all. I love to keep this on hand and my kids like them too. They help relieve nausea, motion sickness, gas, bloating, and any kind of digestive upset. In fact, I keep these in my car, in my kind of like emergency kit in each of my cars, and also in my purse just to have on hand because tummy aches can be a thing when out and on-the-go. Their lemon-ginger-honey flavored Stomach Settle drops contain not just one but three natural remedies for digestive upset: ginger, spearmint, and lemon. Plus, they contain vitamin B6 to help relieve occasional nausea, motion sickness, gas and bloating. Their ingredients are micronized, meaning that they provide faster-acting relief, and they have been really helpful, like I said,

especially for motion sickness. They're individually wrapped. They're great for on-the-go, and I was able to negotiate a discount just for you. You can check this out at upspringbaby.com/pages/wellnessmama, and the code `wellness10` saves you 10%.

This episode is sponsored by Beekeeper's Naturals, which is my go-to source for all things bee-related. If you're not familiar with them, they're an amazing company. They make clean remedies that really work and that my whole family loves to take, no fight required. I'm sure you probably know that bees are absolutely vital to our global food system. And Beekeeper's Naturals is on a mission to save the bees while creating products that support humans as well. They source all of their bee products sustainably and do a lot to support healthy bee colonies. All of their products, of course, are gluten-free, non-GMO, naturally-sourced, and keto-friendly. My personal favorite is their propolis spray which I use for natural immune support. I never have to fight my kids to take it because it tastes delicious and it's my first line of defense at any sign of sniffles or cough or any time I'm traveling. I also really love their B.LXR Brain Fuel, which is a caffeine-free way to support focus and energy. I take this on days like today with podcasting when I need a little extra mental boost. As a listener of this podcast, you can save 15% on all Beekeeper's Naturals products. Go to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama, and the code "wellnessmama" saves you 15%.

And to go back to something you've mentioned a couple of times, you've mentioned kind of that core fear and how they formed so early. And I know for me, one of those certainly was this feeling of like, I'm not good enough. And when I started working on that and trying to like go through all these steps and to really face that, I was confronted with a few things. But one I worried that I was partially able to be so driven and to be so productive because of that and I had seen it manifest in my life. So I worried that if that went away, I would like lose my edge or I'd lose my ability to get things done.

So I guess, two-part question, one would be, you know, is there a downside when we let go of these fears? And also, because I've heard this from now so many people, is there anyone of us that doesn't face some form of that question? I kind of think like, you know, I think we have these internal questions that come up to us and it's like, am I good enough? Am I lovable? Am I worthy of respect? You know, does everyone have that in some form?

Rhonda: Yup. Everybody does, even the Dalai Lama. Yep. Absolutely. And I love that you brought up a fear of not being good enough because that's the generalized wheel of fear. So, you know, we help you find your specific wheel of fear that's unique to you. But generally, if we wanna say like, you know, a generic...it's a generic version of a wheel of fear is, you know, all of us in some way or another feel some sort of feeling of not feeling good enough on some level, right?

And then with the Wheel of Fear, we kind of personalize it and individualize it so it has more oomph and more like, "Oh God, yes, that's it," right? So yeah, everybody has...that's how the Wheel of Fear works. It's how fear works in our neurobiology. Remember, it's about keeping us safe. So what does that mean? That means that your fear of not being good enough and whatever version that is, personalized version, is because you are now in the unknown, right? Fear only visits us when we're in the unknown. It doesn't come in when we're eating

Doritos on the couch watching our favorite show on Netflix, right? It doesn't come up. It only comes up when we're having a new thought, when we're having a new experience, when we're, you know, wanting to take a step forward. And again, it could be just a thought. It could be just a thought. It's not about just taking action. Our thoughts scare the crap out of us.

So, you know that not feeling good enough, you know, says like, "Okay, see this is the unknown. We don't know what to do." And fear says, "I can't guarantee your safety. I can't keep you safe here because I don't know what's gonna happen," because neuroscience has shown now, Katie, that basically, the way we're wired is to look at the past for a template, for our present situation, okay? So we literally automatically, unconsciously, look in the past for a solution to our present problems. And that's why it feels like we're repeating the past even though it may look better, it may have a different name, may, you know, like, it didn't come up for two years, but now we're like, "Are you kidding me? It's happening again. I thought I picked differently this time," right? Because the brain and body only know how to look at what's already happened, the known, to look for solutions to problem-solve.

So unless you are consciously awake and aware to start using what's called the frontal lobe and start making a new choice, a different choice, and being able to step in the unknown, your automatic responses will always be based on the past. So, you know, that fear not being good enough, you're thinking of opening that business or falling in love or whatever, and it goes, "Oh well, let's do it this way." You know, and, "Oh by the way," it's gonna bring up not feeling good enough. So if you're gonna take a risk, if you're gonna take a stretch, is what we call Stretch, Risk, or Die in Fearless Living, when we start taking Stretch, Risk, or Die, you know, that fear is going to come up because you are now in the unknown and the Wheel of Fear will be triggered anytime you're in the unknown, unless you have a different process, unless you have a different way to look at the unknown.

But bottom line is we're made to stay safe. Our whole being is about safety, is about keeping us alive. And remember, the brain doesn't know the difference between an emotional risk, emotional fear, versus a physical fear. So you thinking about falling in love, or you thinking about getting married, or you thinking about opening your business or buying a house or selling a house, any of those things, if it is an unknown, fear will trigger and go, "Yes, we don't know what to do here. We better use a past solution for the present problem," which of course is most likely ineffective, right, for many things we wanna do.

So fear is triggered by the unknown. So I always say that freedom equals your capacity to live in the unknown. Freedom equals your capacity to live in the unknown. If you're not capable and not willing to live in the unknown, which means the control freaks out there, which so many of us are, you know, if we're not willing to give up control and actually step forward into the unknown, the fear has you, fear owns you, right? Fear has you. So we all have that fear of not being good enough in whatever way it shows up for us. It's something unique. And our whole neurobiology and the way we're wired is to look in the past for a solution to the present, which again, most likely is ineffective because we're in a different environment, we're in a different age, we're, you know, in a different situation.

And so that's why we keep feeling like we're repeating ourselves over and over again, even though we think we're choosing differently. But we have to be willing to step out into the unknown and become masterful living in the unknown in order to actually have the freedom that we truly desire and truly want.

Katie: That makes sense. And I think another thing that is very top-of-mind for a lot of people listening right now, they probably understand and can identify these things in their own personal lives. But then when we're facing something that is, you know, big or out of our control or right now like with global stuff going on, or we're facing fears of our children getting sick or our parents getting sick or these really big...you know, life-threatening disease or chronic illness or things that are bigger than just us being able to live with the fear, what are some tips for that? Because I think we're in a place societally where there is a lot of overwhelm and anxiety and fear. And so I'd love to hear your insight on how we can work through those things that we can't just change.

Rhonda: Yeah. So the first thing is that of course, we have to take care of ourselves from a real practical level. You know, we have to make sure that we take care of what needs to be taken care of and not stay in, like, "Why is this happening to me?" Because "Why is this happening to me?" is not helpful and it doesn't move us forward. So, and why is it happening to you is because, you know, we may know and we may not know, right? We may not understand how it's happening to us. But instead, it's like, "Okay, so what are the practical applications? What are the practical things that I need to do right now to keep myself physically safe?" because the first thing that we always have to do is to keep ourselves physically safe.

So, you know, trauma work is always about, you know, if you don't feel emotionally safe, go to the physical first and go, "Well, am I physically safe?" Look around you. Make sure, "Am I physically safe?" If you're physically safe, then you can start addressing the emotional fears, right? So that's the first thing is like, just physically, are you safe? You know, do you have everything you need in place? And if you don't, great, then it's time to problem-solve. Reach out, ask for help, which, of course, asking for help is one of the greatest gifts that we can give ourselves or another human being. And it's one of the things that most of us don't do.

So we have to move into a deep level of self-care, deep level of connection, deep level of seeing our own innocence, moving past all of the fears that we've had, about, you know, needing help or asking for help or wanting connection. Like, we gotta get back down to basics of we all have needs. I have a need, you have a need, we all have needs, and can we take care of our own needs and can we take care of the needs of the ones we love? Right? And then can we move into letting go what we're not in control of?

So I have an exercise that I've done with many a client that's called Control, no Control. And I ask clients to get a piece of paper and, you know, make two columns. What are they in control of and what are they not in control of? And start listing all the things you are in control of and listing all the things you're not in control of. And so all the things you are in control of, what can you do to actually take charge of that? Like what are the things that you can do? And most of us focus on what we're not in control of, which increases our anxiety, which increases our overwhelm, which increases our guilt, which increases our, etc., etc., etc., all of our fears.

And we're actually not paying attention to what we actually are in control of. So make the list, make the list of "What am I in control of and what am I not in control of?"

And then, you know, if you're a believer of God or any spirituality, the things that are not in your control, just hand them over, right? And if you don't have a spiritual philosophy, then you get to surrender and let go from a human perspective and go, "Okay, I can only control A, B, C, D, E, F," because I guarantee you, you're in more control than you think, "And the things that I'm not in control of, yes, I can ask for help, I can seek solutions, I can connect in etc." Like these times right now are asking us to learn the skills we need to have the life that we want, regardless of the circumstances of our lives.

So this is asking us to reach out when maybe we haven't reached out, asking for help when maybe we've been afraid to ask for help. Being willing to face a fear of rejection or, you know, etc., you know, caring about each other and caring about ourselves. So, you know, fear wants us to isolate, i.e., really like "I only will take care of myself and I only have to preserve myself." But in fact, the true way to connect, the true way to survive, the true way to expand, the true way to live our destiny is with each other.

And so write that list of Control and not Control and start doing the things that you can control and be willing to...the things you can't control, are you willing to ask for help? Are you willing to reach out? Are you willing to connect? And what are you willing to really practice letting go of that's not up to you. It's not gonna ever be up to you. So what can you do? I think that starts giving us our power back because our power and our helplessness and our hopelessness happens because we only focus on what we're not in control of.

So when you start kind of grasping and labeling and owning what you can control, you start feeling a little bit more powerful. You start feeling like, "Okay, I can make a difference here. And that's gonna move you out of that fear zone into freedom zone."

Katie: I love that. And I think that ties into something that is a theme through a lot of writers that I admire, including you and including people like Victor Frankl who wrote "Man's Search for Meaning," and many of the stoic philosophers that talk about, you know, we don't have control over the world or what happens to us, but we do always have control over our reactions and how we respond and even how we interpret those events.

And I reread Viktor Frankl every year and it's always such a great reminder because, you know, like you, he's been through things much tougher than I have. And so when someone who has been through...I love the quote, you know, "Has been through the fire, comes out carrying water for the rest of us," it's just so inspiring. And so I think that's a wonderful reminder and centering place to think of is that we always have that aspect of control, to choose kindness, to choose our response, to choose gratitude and to choose positivity. And I'm guessing there's a lot of people listening who a lot of this is resonating with them or they see parts of their lives and things that you've said today. I know you've also written several books. So for someone who is just kind of delving into this for the first time, where do you recommend them starting?

Rhonda: Well, first thing that I would like them to do is, of course, if they're ready and willing to read "Fearless Living" or get the audiobook on audible, you know, etc., start just, you know, listening over and over again to understand how your fear works. Because I think again, I think one of the greatest gifts that "Fearless Living" gives to the world is a release of shame. You know, I know when people find their Wheel of Fear and Wheel of Freedom and really understand that it's not them that is doing this, you know, not them that, you know, is lazy, stupid. That is not you. That is not your true nature and it's only a fear response and you really see that that's just fear acting out to keep you safe. And it's not about you. The shame just dissolves and melts away.

And I don't know about you, Katie, but you know, shame ran my life for so many decades and that shame is the thing that kept me small, stuck, and you know, afraid. And when I could melt that shame away, I started having space and breathing room to start really occupying and owning my life in a more true way and real authentic way. And so, you know, so the first thing is, yes, grab my book, listen to the book.

The other thing that I would invite you to do is I actually...and Katie, I hope this is okay, but this is moving through me right now. So I hope you're okay with this. But I would love to gift your folks an exercise called Stretch, Risk or Die that I mentioned earlier. And is that okay if I do that, Katie? I'm sorry, I didn't ask you beforehand. It's just coming through me. Is that all right?

Katie: Sure.

Rhonda: So go to fearlessliving.org, fearlessliving.org/risk. So fearlessliving.org/rsk R-I-S-K and I'm gonna, I just think this mini-course right now of Stretch, Risk, or Die really starting to see how fear kind of owns your decisions and start thinking of decisions differently. There's worksheets in there, there's, you know, three short videos in there and you can start doing an exercise immediately to start helping yourself. And I describe it in detail. It's called Stretch, Risk, or Die. And it's allowing you to start moving outside your comfort zone, and start moving in the direction of freedom, to start moving into the direction of the unknown. And again, I give you tons of resources in there, tons of templates, etc. So go to fearlessliving.org/risk, R-I-S-K, and I think this exercise is going to support you immediately. It's one of my clients' very favorite exercises, students', very favorite exercises.

So I'd love to gift it to you right now in this time that we're living in to help you start noticing, "Okay, this is why I'm not taking that Stretch, Risk, or Die. Okay, got it." And now you can. And that's the gift that I would love to support you with is saying yes to yourself, yes to that intuition, yes to your larger vision, yes to the true nature of who you are, yes to the person you were born to be. Because I do believe that all of us do have a destiny and fear is the only thing that stops that destiny from unfoldment. And I am committed to helping you, me, the world, live their destinies and fulfill their destinies. And so I don't want fear to run your life anymore. I want you to run your life.

Katie: I love that. And I'll make sure that all the links to everything we've talked about, including your books, and including that, are in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm. And I think this is a perfect starting place for a lot of people and I know that people can find you and keep learning from you. But I appreciate your time in being here today and for all the work that you do for so, so many people.

Rhonda: Thank you, Katie. What a gift you are to the world. I'm so grateful I get to know you. Thank you.

Katie: Thank you, and thanks to all of you as always, for listening, for sharing one of your most valuable resources, 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.

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