



Episode 341: Q&A with Katie: Homeschooling, Motivation, Magnesium, & Parenting Teens

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is sponsored by Jigsaw Health, my source for magnesium. You probably know, if you've read my blog, that magnesium is responsible for over 300 biochemical reactions in the body. It impacts blood pressure, metabolism, immune function, and many other aspects of health, including hormones. It's known as the master mineral and it's one of the few supplements I take regularly. And I have found a specific way to take it that works best for me in very specific forms because if magnesium is taken in the wrong way it can lead to digestive upset or if it's taken too quickly it can cause all kinds of problems. So, I take two supplements. One called MagSRT which is a slow release form of the dimagnesium malate. The slow release technology makes it easier on the digestive system. So I don't get any of the digestive disturbance that comes with some forms of magnesium. I take this form in the morning and at lunch. So, two capsules with breakfast, two capsules with lunch. And at night, I take a different product MagSoothe, which is magnesium glycinate which is magnesium bound with the amino acid glycine to help sleep. And in combination, I noticed the biggest effect from those two particular products. You can check them both out and save by going to jigsawhealth.com/wellnessmama. And the code `wellness10` will give you \$10 off any order.

This episode is sponsored by EverlyWell - at-home lab tests that you can get without a doctor's order! I've used many of their tests and can recommend a couple that have been especially helpful. They have an at-home allergy test for 40 of the most common allergens using the same CLIA-certified labs used by Allergists and Doctors. The labs are reviewed by an independent physician and this lab test measures IgE levels of common allergens including pet dander, mold, trees, grasses, and more. But you can do it at home with a finger stick. I also really like their food sensitivity tests that test for IgG reactions. This was a big key for me in my health recovery, as there were foods that didn't show up as an allergy that were causing inflammation for me. I used an elimination diet as well, but this food sensitivity test also filled in the missing pieces of the puzzle for me. Through healing my gut, I've been able to remove all sensitivities except for eggs. Finding out I was highly sensitive to eggs made a huge difference as I ate them often as an inexpensive protein source. I feel so much better now that I don't eat eggs and I would never have known that without this test! I also use their at-home Vitamin D test to keep an eye on those levels. Check out all of their tests at wellnessmama.com/go/everlywell and use code `MAMA10` for 10% off.

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com our new line of natural personal care products that work as well or better than their conventional chemical alternatives and you can check those out at wellnesse.com that's wellness with an E on the end where we have hair care, toothpaste and now hand sanitizer available. In this episode, I am answering some questions that you guys submitted and going into detail on a few things that I got an especially a number of questions on including homeschooling, our power parenting differently now that we have teenagers, staying motivated, magnesium and a few others I hope will be a really fun episode. I would love as always to hear your feedback in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm and I can answer questions there. If there are any follow-up questions.

I also want to say a big thank you to all of you who filled out the podcast survey and gave feedback on things that I can improve with the podcast. Definitely took your feedback to heart and have a sign right now I'm looking at to remind me to speak more slowly. I know that's something I struggle with. Also, will be playing with moving around and shortening the ads to hopefully provide a better experience that way. And I loved that you guys recommended having certain guests on for round two, which I often talk about but haven't done with a lot of these guests. So thank you all for the honest feedback. It was extremely helpful. Without further ado, I'm just going to start reading some user questions and going into detail about how I handle them.

So from both Ruth and Mariana asked about homeschooling, how we figured out a curriculum, how we structure it, and if anything has changed now that we have older kids. And as a follow-up, Melinda asked, she said, "I heard that you homeschool. If so, can you give tips on how you choose curriculum? Give us the insight information on the early years. Also wondering how you made your decision to keep your kids home and create a culture of learning at home."

And this is one of my favorite topics and I'm hopefully gonna be able to share some usable stuff today. I'm going to go deep on our whole system and kind of from the ground up how we built it. Also you can hear a lot of this in a podcast I did with my oldest son. Not specifically the homeschool side, but how it's manifesting all the different things that we're doing. With him now that he's older. You probably have heard me talk about how I don't really post about my kids on social media.

They're not visible on the blog and their names have not been used and we wanted to give them the freedom to not have an online presence if they wanted to. We wanted it to be their choice. And now that he is 13 and has proven he's incredibly responsible, we're letting this be his decision. So he just released a cookbook, it's called Chef Junior. I'll put a link in the show notes if you want to check it out. But this is one of his first projects that's been public facing. And so because of that, he's chosen to have a social media presence and to be more publicly visible. But in the podcast I did with him, we talk about some aspects of homeschooling. We also talk about the entrepreneur program we do with them, which I'm going to talk about in a couple of minutes and just how his opinion of how all of this has been from his side.

So it's kind of the balance to me just explaining the parent and teacher side of this. So that link will be in the show notes. If you want to check out that episode. It's a pretty good compliment to this one. But in general, we started from scratch when it came to homeschooling, when our kids were about to hit school age. We didn't want to just recreate regular school at home and I didn't even just want to follow a curriculum and make a normal homeschool scenario. I tried to really step back and think through what actually is the best way to teach kids in today's world. And I reconsidered all of the traditional methods because I feel like a lot of homeschool programs while they do offer a lot more flexibility and many certainly have their strengths they do kind of sort of build on the just the same system they teach in schools.

So when I say I questioned all of those things, I even questioned things like traditional grades, the traditional subjects and orders and even writing methods. If you have been a listener for a while or reader, you might've heard me mention the 80/20 rule and I definitely applied that here as well. If you haven't heard of it, it's

basically the idea that 20% of inputs give 80% of the results. And in business, the flip is also true that often 80% of problems are caused by 20% customers. This plays out in a lot of different fields. But I wanted to see how this would apply to school. So basically figuring out what are the 20% of skills, subjects, etc., that they need to be successful as adults no matter what area they go into as an adult and focus on those as the core and then let them specialize beyond that.

And before I started building the practical side of a curriculum, I wanted to really map out the objectives. Like what are the key objectives that I want my kids to get to adulthood having intact. So I thought through what are the most important qualities that my kids are likely going to need as adults in today's world. And I realized no matter what they decided to do, whether it be a more traditional educational path and our traditional career, or whether it be something entrepreneurial or something that doesn't even exist yet. Because certainly what I do for a living did not exist when I was some of their ages. And so I wanted skills that would help them in any of those scenarios. And we honed in on the skills of critical thinking, creativity, innovation, ability to connect dots where other people don't see them, the ability and willingness to question authority when needed and the foundations be able to learn new skills quickly. And we felt like those were things that could not easily be outsourced to technology and that would serve them in whatever area they decided to pursue.

We also wanted them to at least have the foundational skills to be entrepreneurs if they decided to. So on that note, we don't prioritize college, but I wanted them to be able to get in easily if they wanted to. I didn't know college was optional, truly until I got there and my kids will definitely have a different experience that way. But I'm not just teaching them skills that will get them to college. I'm not training them to be good test takers. Like I was trying to be a good test taker. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but I wanted them to have the usable real life skills and being able to take tests and being able to get into college if they wanted to, to be just a secondary skill of that.

What I realized is that technology is rapidly changing work culture. So it's impossible to know truly what their adult world will look like, especially for the little ones. And I thought about, like I mentioned, even in my life being a blogger and a podcaster, these things weren't even options when I was six years old. So if someone had asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up, I wouldn't have ever thought to think of them because they didn't exist. So in a time where they might be living in a completely different world in 10, 12 years because of technology, how can I best prepare them for that constantly changing scenario? And it made me really reflect and ask, does a traditional school culture do that or do even most homeschool curriculums do this? And I found that for me at least, the answer didn't seem to be that they did, or at least that there were better ways, to prepare kids for adult life that would still teach the things they needed to learn with, but in a way that maintained those core traits that were so important.

So I took the 20% of the 80/20 rule and I ran it through those criteria of maintaining those core traits. And I tried to figure out ways to teach it that met those standards. This was pretty easy at early ages because kids are naturally so curious and we of course wanted to maintain their natural curiosity. And so often it was as simple as answering their questions when they ask why or how or encouraging follow up questions and researching with them. So many times when they were little and still with the little ones, now they ask a

question. I'll say things like, I don't know, but let's research it together and find out. We spend a lot of time just researching random topics and learning and reading. We followed some basic programs for phonics and reading when they were really young just to help them make that jump.

But really also just read a lot with them when they were really little. From there I assembled the curriculum we use completely from scratch. I will also say that this is no small job with six kids and trying to individualize the curriculum to each of them. So my parents live nearby and my dad is a retired college professor. And it's really helpful to have extra hands on deck. It's been a tremendous advantage because my kids essentially have four teachers, which is really helpful when there are six of them. And they also, they have other teachers besides just me. But to get more specific because the questions from you guys were somewhat more specific. That's kind of the overarching idea that we built on. And because of that, some of the things that we do differently, I think even then most homeschool curriculum one example we grade backwards and what I mean by that is we don't start with a hundred and you lose points if you get something wrong.

We start with zero and we build, and this was very intentional because with my personality in school, like I said, I got really good at taking tests, but I viewed anything below a hundred as a failure. And I was scared to make mistakes. And I'm not saying that just traditional school grading was the reason for that. They were aspects of my personality that would have responded that way I think no matter what. But it was important to me. I didn't want my kids to fear making mistakes and I didn't want them to fear failure. And so I wanted them to be focused basically on a growth mindset versus being penalized for making mistakes. Because in real life you often grow and learn some of your best lessons from mistakes. And it's in correcting mistakes that you often come to success. So we backwards grade let them start from zero and build up just so that it's the growth focus versus the penalization for making mistakes.

We also don't structure schoolwork to fill time, but the key objective is mastery of a topic. So they don't just get worksheets to pass a certain number of hours per day and when they can demonstrate that any subject reliably that they understand it and have mastery of it, they can move on from that. They don't have to stay with the concept once they've actually obtained the skill. And that also kind of ties in with the 80/20. It's not about just filling time or just hitting eight hours a day. It's about mastery of the subject. And that's also incentivizing them to actually learn it versus just go through the motions. Based on one thing. I, in my own school, I don't expect them to show their work a certain way, especially in things like math. If they can explain an answer and how they got there, no matter how they did it, then I let them count because I actually want them to think outside the box solutions.

And in that same line, if they can get an accurate answer in their head reliably and consistently without showing work, they don't have to show the work. As long as that is very strongly, they are consistently getting the right answer. I also listen to them when they come with questions about a subject or want to move past a subject. I remember very clearly being in high school and having discussions with teachers about why do we have to do so many of these worksheets and why do we have to keep doing these drills and being told, well, you won't always have a calculator with you. And I laugh now because we all do have our phones with us all the time and we have an incredible computer that sits in our back pocket all the time. And so again, try to keep in mind what is adult life going to likely look like for them. And how do you best prepare them for that?

So rather than focusing on fundamentals, how can we build on technology that will likely still be there? We also have unusual subjects but beyond the basic ones. So we do 80/20, and they do get the typical basic math and science and reading, etc. But we have new subjects. There's one called topics and this is, it encourages them to research something new each day. And this is with the focus on maintaining curiosity and asking questions and it can be any topic. And so they might research boats or bananas or llamas or whatever it may be, but they learn these fun facts about different topics. And then it's always fun, dinnertime conversation based on some of the fun things they've learned that day or my older son often is researching technology or environmental topics and have actually going deep on the science.

But our goal there was to kind of just mentally get them in a habit of always wanting to learn and pursue new things. And so they get time every day, just blocked off to read fun things that interest them. Also when they finish their work, they're done for the day. We don't follow a timeline, I alluded to that. But unlike a regular school, I don't need them to sit in a desk from eight to three. So it's about efficiency and if they can finish their work correctly more quickly, they're done for the day and they can go then play outside, which we definitely encourage and play with their friends. We also do a lot of hands on and experiments and this is with that encouraging innovation and out of the box thinking. So whether it be things like trying to design some kind of contraption that would keep an egg from breaking when we throw it off the roof, whether it be physics or chemistry experiments.

And often we'll do the experiment and then work backwards so they'll see the thing and then have to figure out why it happened the way it happened. Or we do a lot of Socratic type things where like question asking and talking through it versus taking a test being like trying to be told there was one right answer. For a long time we took field trips once a week as well, so every Friday we would dedicate to going to a museum or a Marine center or even a business manufacturing plant somewhere they could learn something that was outside of their normal day and it was really fun just to talk to local businesses. They weren't all by any means like a normal school field trip to get to go to places and see how things were made or how the inside of a business ran. That was something that I think was really impactful for them as well.

Another thing we do differently, both from a parenting perspective and this also crosses over into homeschooling, is we encourage them to question authority respectfully and even and especially me. So they'll often hear me say, you know, ask questions, always ask questions when you're told something, don't take it at face value. And my oldest son, when he was younger, he said, even you, I should even question you? And I said, even, and especially me, because right now I represent authority in your life and if you can't respectfully question me now or have the ability to cognitively do that, you won't be able to do that in adult life when you need to. And of course, the respectful side, it's always important there because in adult life that's, that's really important as well.

But I wanted them to get in the habit of not just when an authority figure told them something, not just taking it at face value, but being able to ask the why and the how questions to back up that answer and to think through it on their own. A practical tip, this came from a former podcast guest, Naveen Jain, who is an

entrepreneur. He's been, he's started many companies and he has three adult children. Who are all doing pretty spectacular things. And so I asked him, what are some things that you did that you think helped give them the skills to pursue whatever they want to now pursue as adults? And what are some things that as parents we can do to help our kids develop those skills? And one piece of advice that he gave was to let them watch TED talks each morning.

And so we try to often let our kids watch three unrelated TED talks. And this goes toward that core value of wanting them to learn how to connect the dots and think outside the box. So kids are natural pattern recognizers and when you give them three topics or three videos that are unrelated, they're still gonna try to find connections and correlation. And so we'll have them watch three different TED talks. And TED talks are amazing in their own right because you have people who are the best in their field and this is their whole life work and they're summarizing it into 16 minutes. So you're getting incredible information in a very short amount of time. And by having them watch unrelated things are hoping that they start to see patterns where other people aren't connecting the dots. So whether they're watching a TED talk on mushrooms and something to do with the environment and some kind of technology. If those can be used somehow, synergistically, and one practical thing that came from this, you can hear more about it in my son's podcast episode this week but we now have, he's raising super worms in his closet in our house and other types of worms and larva and various phases in our garden. And I think this was maybe indirectly related to a TED talk, but he had a theory that these worms could be used to break down certain types of plastic that are not recyclable. And he explains it much better than I can, but it was the idea of connecting the dots where other people wouldn't necessarily think to do that. And then being willing to experiment and take risks and see if it actually works.

I mentioned I wanted them to be able to go to college if they decided to. So I am teaching them the game of testing in case they decide to go to college. And to be clear, I do consider it a game. I was a really good test taker and it's a completely worthless life skill for the most part. But like anything, there are systems and you can 80/20 test taking as well. And so my kids are taking the PSAT and they'll take the SAT and the ACT, but they know it's a game and I'm teaching them how to beat the game. But they don't view this as an objective marker of their intelligence or their ability to do well in life. They view this as a game that they could beat and I really strongly feel that's what it is. So if they want to go to college, they will be able to do that. But I won't really encourage college unless they want to specialize in something that actually needs it like medicine or I guess accounting would be one thing that needs a degree and a license to be able to practice. That said if they also just want to go to college for the social side and they acknowledge that that's why they want to go and they are willing to pay for it. I fully support that as well. I just don't want them to go with the idea that I had that there's no other options or that that's going to be the only path to a career for them. We also try very hard to cater curriculum and treat every child individually because even just with six of them, they all learn so differently and some of them do wonderful on their own. Others need a little bit more one-on-one help or explanation. Some of them are incredible at art and extremely creative naturally whereas, a couple of them were extremely analytical and understand math and science, but art is a struggle. And so trying to cater the curriculum to them individually to play on their strengths but also challenge them and encourage them to get out of their comfort zone on their weaknesses.

As they get older, we also want to really encourage and help support them in whether we encourage, hopefully, them starting a business or if they want to learn a trade versus traditional college, start some kind of business venture. And so we are now with our older ones in the phases of kind of shifting school away from bookwork now that they've pretty much done that 20% of the central skills they need and into the hands on practice of whatever that's going to be for them, whether it's starting a business, etc. And one thing that came up this week that I loved my oldest was interviewed on another podcast as well. And one of the questions that came through from that podcast was, what do you want to be when you grow up? And he's never been asked that question by us because we, we purposely avoid that one. We try to ask them questions like, what problems will you solve? Who will you help when you grow up? What hard questions will you answer when you grow up? But get them to think in that mindset versus like what traditional just job role are you going to fill? Because we don't want them to feel like they're defined by their job. And statistically they will likely have many careers or at least several. And it was really encouraging to hear him respond to that question on the podcast by saying, I don't think that's the right question to ask. Why do we have to be defined by a job? Why not ask, you know, some of those questions, what problems will you solve or who will you help? And so we fostered this by asking versions of those questions daily, even in small interactions with them. Like if there's a disagreement between siblings instead of us and an acting and the law, we'll start with questions of how can you solve this problem? How can you find an answer that's mutually agreeable so that we don't have to step in, there doesn't have to be timeout or we don't have to mitigate the situation. We also ask them questions like, everyday, what hard questions did you ask today? What did you fail at today? And what did you learn from that? What are you grateful for today? And some of the best parenting moments and lessons have come just from those little interactions with them that it'll lead to the deeper conversations that you can't ever fully just facilitate.

I've also mentioned before that we have a contract with our kids that before they can have a car or their own phone, they have to have a profitable business for a year. Does not mean it has to be a wildly profitable business, but it does have to be a business that they run that shows a profit for a period of a year. And we are helping them do this. We've built a business incubator of sorts where we're not just obviously throwing them out into the world and telling them to start a business. We're helping them do that because entrepreneurship is a really important key skill for us and so our older ones are beginning the phases of that now as they finish their traditional school. And that's the reason we have things like worms in our closets where he's growing that he's also written the cookbook and he's starting a podcast. Our oldest is and those all have the potential to be profitable and we'll see how that plays out. He's about a year and a half from being able to get a driver's permit. So I think he's motivated and we'll see which one ends up being a profitable business. But our reasoning with that is, that some of these skills we want them to get to adulthood with can most easily be taught in a hands on way through learning how to run a business because you're learning the financial side, which a lot of kids get to adulthood without having a clear idea of how to manage finances. Also the idea that it's not just about revenue but profit and understanding how finances work, understanding how debt works and when it's good and when it's bad, but also just more day to day skills like consistency and having to show up when it's hard and working through problems and working through risk adversity because I think a lot of kids, at least for me, I made it to college, afraid to take risks because I gotten good at the school model and entrepreneurship was a big jump for me and having to figure it out as I went. And so I wanted to give them all of the tools in our toolkit if they decided to do that.

I also got a question from Jamie. Are there any books or approaches for parenting/homeschooling that has been helpful to you for particularly for ages three and up? And how would you describe your parenting approach? I feel like our parenting approach probably has a lot of turnover with the things I've just explained for homeschooling. I do love the positive parenting solutions course. I recently interviewed her and that's a great one. I'll link to in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm. I also love for the learning side to circle back on homeschooling. I love Jim Kwik's information on rapid learning and maintaining creativity. He's a really good resource. But as far as books that have helped for parenting I found that often the books that gave me the most applicable helpful information for homeschooling and for parenting were not parenting books at all. I was able to pull parenting lessons from them, but they were not designed to be parenting books in the least. Whereas some of the parenting books, often were just rules or systems that you should follow directly, versus actually how do you cultivate with each individual child, kind of those things that we talked about. So, I'll link all these books in the show notes. These are some of the ones that I have found helpful. I have quite a few introverts. Well one of my kids. And there's a really cool test called the Fascinate Test by Sally Hogshead and it kind of ranks you based on core motivations and like what drives you. And one of mine is mystique of just kind of like a more introverted private type of trait. And all of my kids got that, I think, from me. So I have a lot of introverts and I really liked the book, "Quiet the power of," I believe it's the "power of introverts in a world that won't stop talking" or something along that lines. I will link it in the show notes. That was really helpful to me and learning how to parent my introvert kids without like shutting them down and with getting them to open up when they needed to and just interact with them most efficiently. So that, and, and also for introvert friends and it was also helpful just for myself as well.

"Dare to Lead" by Brené Brown was helpful, really helpful from a parenting perspective, it's meant to be a leadership book but I think in a very real way, parents are leaders within the home. And that really helped me reframe how I was talking to my kids and fostering that communication in a way that made room for vulnerability and made room for them to talk to me. And that's something that's increasingly important as they get older. And as I find teenagers are not just as talkative at first glance as a four year old would be. So you have to find ways to really nurture that relationship and keep it strong.

I also like "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" by Patrick Lencioni, of course a business book talking about business teams, but again, there's crossover into family teams. And that one was helpful for me in just the management side and also the interpersonal side with the family. One that is more in the parenting realm that I liked was "Free Range Kids" and I've written before I can link in the show notes about kind of our approach to parenting in that way and not wanting to keep our kids inside very much, wanting them to be outside, to be able to take risks, to play outside.

And another one along that in that vein would be "The Happiest Kids in the World: How Dutch Parents Help Their Kids (and Themselves) by Doing Less." So those are the two probably parenting specific ones that I found personally helpful. From the learning one, there's one called "Moonwalking with Einstein," which I found really fascinating, just in developing our homeschool approach and also in trying to maintain that inherent curiosity in my kids. Simon Sinek "Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action." Again, kind of thinking of parents as the leadership role in the house rather than a dictatorship role. I tried to think of that as instead of forcing my kids to take action, because in business, I don't force my team to do anything. We all work together toward a common goal and everybody kind of knows what their roles are, but I don't just yell at

them and nag them and force them to do things. And so how could I inspire that same thing in my household? So some of these leadership books were really helpful in that method of how do I get my kids to want to be part of this team and to want to take action.

There's also one called "Anything You Want: 40 Lessons for a New Kind of Entrepreneur." Again, it's an entrepreneurial book, but lots of crossover into leadership and parenting as well. Another parenting specific one is "No Drama Discipline." I didn't like everything about that book but I was able to pull some helpful tips from that one. And there's a new one, "How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk" and the "Conscious Parent." Those were some that I have been able to pull some tips from.

I don't agree with everything in any of those, but there's some really helpful stuff in there. And then one of course I've mentioned many times before is "The Four Hour Workweek." That's where I first heard about 80/20. I followed Tim Ferriss for a long time and that book helps me in business. That also helped in just learning to think in that way of being efficient and effective and it applies to a lot within the home as well. So separate of all of those things, that was more the homeschooling and parenting side. I think something else is really important to our approach is that we prioritize things that help brain development through movement. And I've had Carol Garner Houston on this podcast. We can link to those as well in the show notes. But she talks about how basically today's kids, a lot of times, are not doing enough of certain kinds of movements to fully develop their vestibular and their limbic systems and this can have crossover effects into school and make things harder for them.

And so we try to do things that or like encourage them to do things that how are movement based and that fully developed their limbic and vestibular systems. So things like pole vaulting, gymnastics, music, art, gardening, lots and lots of time outside playing, climbing trees, running, slackline, jumping, helping with projects around the house. So they're learning how to use tools, which are an extension of the brain in various ways. And then we've set up a Ninja course in our backyard so they can do all of the running, jumping, climbing, hanging things that help with that aspect of kid development.

And then lastly, I also think one thing we probably do differently than a lot of parents may be, certainly in a lot of school, we don't do the whole follow your passion or do what makes you happy or like I said, we don't do a whole, what do you want to be when you grow up? With them, we try to focus on, even right now at your current age, what can you master that improves the world in some way? What can you right now become the top 1% in the world at and then build skills like that. So kind of teaching them the idea of mastery, which is a much more, I feel like effective goal than just getting through a school year or checking a box. And the idea of being in business as well. If they can keep that rapid learning ability whatever they decide to do in the future, they'll have the tools to learn it and to execute and to hopefully master.

And then to circle back to Melinda's question about why we decided to homeschool and create that learning culture at home. I explained this a little bit, but I just, I felt like a lot of things about our current educational, system would not accomplish those core objectives with our kids and it wouldn't get them to adulthood with those core skills intact. And of course there are outliers and exceptions. I know there are many great schools,

many great things about many curriculums that I'm not trying to downplay that at all, but for our family, we realized that we could create a stronger culture of learning at home. We were willing to kind of innovate from the ground up and do a lot of the things that we're trying to teach them. And in some ways it's also made things easier because it solved for a lot of variables in schools that we don't have to kind of worry about whether it be school lunches not being as nutritionally optimal as many parents would like or the constant EMF exposure or waking up too early when there's a lot of data saying teenagers should sleep in and that like, we really need to prioritize sleep for the proper development of a teenage brain.

So lots of reasons we went into that. Happy to talk about that more. If anybody wants to hear more in depth on that, you can leave questions in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm or always ping me on Instagram and I can do some follow-ups. A little bit related. SJ asked, "What are your food rules now with having teens?" And I love this question because it has changed for me a little bit over the years. I've written before about our basic food rules in general that they never have to eat if they're not truly hungry. But there's no complaining about food. We don't use vegetables as a bribe for other things. When they're little we try to encourage them to just try one bite of all of the different foods that are available and just see if they like it without the commitment of facing a whole plate of it.

And we focus on nutrients, not macros. We gear our food toward our genes. So I run all of our genes as a family and I cook for the family in a way that is supportive of all of our genetic factors. And then add in like some of our kids do better with more carbs, so I'll add in rice or potatoes for them. And then we try to often eat together whenever possible. And then lastly, food is not a reward or punishment. It's a fuel. So they don't get bribed to eat something by eating something that's "healthy." And we've tried to just focus on family dinner. I often cook, although now the older ones are cooking more and more but the idea being my responsibility as their mom is to make sure that there's nutrient dense food available for them when they're hungry and their responsibility is to decide if they are hungry or not and if they're gonna eat that food or not.

So I don't force them to eat if they are not hungry or often that means if they're being picky, they don't have to eat, but they don't get a separate meal just because they don't like a certain food. So there's no peanut butter and jelly sandwich because you don't like what was cooked, but you're welcome to wait until the next meal. We kind of joke that picky has another name in our house and it's called fasting. But with teenagers there is the acknowledgement they do need more fuel, especially protein, especially things like greens to bind to excess hormones as they go through puberty and healthy fats to support all of the aspects of hormone and brain development that are happening because after the early infant and toddler years, the teenage years, it's an intense phase of growth for them. So I did want to make sure we were being really cognizant of supporting them nutritionally.

So in those meals that we cook at home, I had lots of olive oil to their diets for the good fats. I work in greens whenever possible. They take a few key supplements that really seem to help. So I can link to these in the show notes. They take Just Thrive probiotics and K2-7. And then depending on their specific genes, they take a couple other things as well. I found with teenagers and pre-teens that very often, when grumpy, add food, so they do, especially when they're working out, they do eat more often. We don't typically do a lot of snacking between meals, but with them in these ages, I have been doing that a lot more. So I'll always just keep like

supplies of vegetables or healthy proteins, beef sticks. There's a list of foods they know they can always eat that are pretty much protein and vegetable based.

And so if they're truly hungry, they can always get those foods without having to come ask. I also think it's important to remember with teens, that the goal of the teenage years is for teenagers to become independent and very soon they will have to make their own food choices. So I don't ever want to demonize a food or make it a forbidden thing that they want more of because they can't have it. I try to keep in mind that you certainly cannot control teenagers. It doesn't work for two year olds and it certainly doesn't work on teenagers. And so rather than trying to dictate food choices I try to approach that from a perspective of respecting their autonomy and giving them the tools to make good decisions, but not forcing what those decisions are. So I love to get them more involved in cooking at this age.

I mentioned that my oldest just wrote a cookbook with his friends and he is able to cook entire meals from scratch and he does this relatively often. In fact about once a week he has a lot of our neighborhood kids over. I think the most I've seen in my house was about 25 all working together to cook something from scratch. So he's kind of actually teaching the younger ones as well, but he's completely capable of cooking a meal from scratch and they do get more leeway if he wants to cook something on his own from scratch. Of course he gets to pick what it is and he gets more choice there. But I think at any age when you get kids involved in cooking, they have a vested interest in wanting to eat the food. And they're also just more likely to, without complaining. For younger ones, I recommend the "Kids Cook Real Food" course from Kitchen Stewardship and I can link that in the show notes as well, but it's a really good primer on all of the essential kitchen skills they need to eventually be able to cook entire meals. And then his cookbook as well is geared toward children so they can learn to cook by making recipes that they will love and get those kitchen skills as well. Just a few other core things. We almost always eat clean at home. So kind of in line with the 80/20 rule. I look at, we eat at home much more than 80% of the time actually. When we're at home and I only have clean food available and then I don't stress as much if we're not at home. I educate when they ask and I, I also educate gently when it can be worked in without me trying to dictate their food choices.

But then beyond that, especially with teenagers, I don't stress when they're not home. So my kids can go to friend's house and they might very well eat sugar and food dyes and gluten and all of those things. And I don't, I try to control that when they're not at my house because again, they're going to be making all of their food decisions very quickly and they now having eaten the way we eat for their whole lives, they notice they don't feel as well when they eat certain things and they almost always still make good food choices when they're not home and when they don't truly eating a few cupcakes or chips or whatever it may be, is not going to ruin them when they're eating nutrient dense at home.

This podcast is sponsored by Jigsaw Health, my source for magnesium. You probably know, if you've read my blog, that magnesium is responsible for over 300 biochemical reactions in the body. It impacts blood pressure, metabolism, immune function, and many other aspects of health, including hormones. It's known as the master mineral and it's one of the few supplements I take regularly. And I have found a specific way to take it that works best for me in very specific forms because if magnesium is taken in the wrong way it can lead to digestive upset or if it's taken too quickly it can cause all kinds of problems. So, I take two supplements. One

called MagSRT which is a slow release form of the dimagnesium malate. The slow release technology makes it easier on the digestive system. So I don't get any of the digestive disturbance that comes with some forms of magnesium. I take this form in the morning and at lunch. So, two capsules with breakfast, two capsules with lunch. And at night, I take a different product MagSoothe, which is magnesium glycinate which is magnesium bound with the amino acid glycine to help sleep. And in combination, I noticed the biggest effect from those two particular products. You can check them both out and save by going to jigsawhealth.com/wellnessmama. And the code `wellness10` will give you \$10 off any order.

This episode is sponsored by EverlyWell - at-home lab tests that you can get without a doctor's order! I've used many of their tests and can recommend a couple that have been especially helpful. They have an at-home allergy test for 40 of the most common allergens using the same CLIA-certified labs used by Allergists and Doctors. The labs are reviewed by an independent physician and this lab test measures IgE levels of common allergens including pet dander, mold, trees, grasses, and more. But you can do it at home with a finger stick. I also really like their food sensitivity tests that test for IgG reactions. This was a big key for me in my health recovery, as there were foods that didn't show up as an allergy that were causing inflammation for me. I used an elimination diet as well, but this food sensitivity test also filled in the missing pieces of the puzzle for me. Through healing my gut, I've been able to remove all sensitivities except for eggs. Finding out I was highly sensitive to eggs made a huge difference as I ate them often as an inexpensive protein source. I feel so much better now that I don't eat eggs and I would never have known that without this test! I also use their at-home Vitamin D test to keep an eye on those levels. Check out all of their tests at wellnessmama.com/go/everlywell and use code `MAMA10` for 10% off.

A few other just teen related things. You asked about food rules, but a couple of things that I'm shifting in, just having teenagers is, like I said, the key objective for now as teenagers is them learning to be kind and self-sufficient and then to integrate as an adult soon.

So focus on those things versus control and rules. I know as a teenager I definitely did not enjoy rules and tended to push back on things. So I'm trying very hard to foster an environment where my kids don't feel like they need to push back and they feel like they're being listened to and understood. And again, check out the podcast with my son if you want to hear his take because this of course is me talking, but if you want to hear his honest feedback on that and it's fun cause he actually questions me a couple of times in the podcast as well, but go listen to that one. One tip I got from the positive parenting solutions course that I mentioned is to use the phrase "convince me."

So when they want to do something as teenagers that I feel is slightly beyond their ability level, instead of just saying no, I list my objections and then say, okay, now convince me. If you can come to me with a plan that addresses these objections and shows me that you can handle this in a responsible way, then I will listen with an open mind and I will consider it. So things like that, trying to make sure that they feel and actually realistically do have autonomy in any area that I can give it to them. Of course, actually listening to them versus just say no and enforcing rules right away, I think as a teenager, from what I remember, I desperately wanted to feel understood and heard. So trying to do everything I can to sure that my kids know, even in the

times when I do have to say no, I'm listening and I understand and there are reasons why they can't do this particular thing, but they can always come to me and I will always listen.

And as they get older, that's making time for unstructured conversation. I've gotten advice from several parents of older kids that some of the best places for that are in the car because they don't have to look right at you. So trying to take a kid with me on errands or just have time in the car. So if they want to talk about something, it's a less stressful way or whether it be on a walk or just, I try to take different kids out for coffee once in a while, giving time where they can bring stuff up that they want, but there is no pressure. And then defaulting to letting them make decisions whenever possible. Encouraging them to have healthy friendships and supporting that. I feel like a lot of teenagers push back because friendships are important but psychologically that whole building into autonomy and developing social circles that does depend on friendships in the teenage years.

So rather than trying to fight them on having friends, encouraging them to have healthy friendships and to be the one, the place where they can all, they can always bring their friends over, they can always hang out. I'll always feed anybody in my house. But that way they don't feel like they have it a lack there or that they need to sneak out or hide things for them to have friends. And then also as teenagers, I'm finding it's really important for them to have a sense of purpose, of some kind of work that that actually contributes both to the family and like with starting the business financially because it's like a goal and something they feel like they're accomplishing and also an activity they love that is an outlet.

So my kids all do pole vaulting and I've recently, I started doing this as well.

They are definitively all much better than I am, which is great. But it's been amazing to watch my daughters, especially because I remember being 12 and being kind of uncomfortable in my body. And especially as things started changing, I was very focused on how my body looks so different all of a sudden and how weird that was. And I see my daughters and to them, their bodies are these incredible tools and machines that they can use to do these really cool activities they want to do. So, of course they're not grown yet, but I'm hopeful that having those activities and having the focus on that will give them a different perspective as they go through puberty and through the teenage years.

She also asked, "What would you do differently in your parenting?" I'm not a big fan of just sitting and wishing the past could be different but I do think we can always of course learn from the past. I think I would have been less dogmatic and more spontaneous and creative early on when they were really young. As I was trying to figure it all out, I was like following parenting rules or trying to figure out how do you get a two year old to do what you want. And I think it would have made more time for spontaneity and just creative activities when they were little. Also, I know it gets said all the time, but savor the small moments because it goes by so, so, so fast. Everyday I'm reminded of that. Just I look at my oldest and remember him as a baby. What feels like yesterday and it's just, it's crazy to have watched it go by so fast.

And then lastly, one that I've learned over time, I wish I could just go gift to myself as an early mom would be to put systems in place much earlier that take the mental stress out so that my kids could have had a calmer mom earlier. I've talked about this some, and I'm actually writing a whole book that kind of walks through this process in your life. But it's not, I don't think, all the things we have to do that often stresses us out. It's the mental, and emotional responsibility of balancing those things. And so I discovered when I applied some of the same principles that work in business to home life, just like I did with some of those parenting books, it took away the mental stress and I was able to actually get more done so I wasn't having to do any less but get more done, but without the stress. So those would be some of my top tips. But yeah, enjoy the small moments would be the top one.

From Sarah, she said, "How do you stay motivated to stay away from sugar or chocolate? I know so much about what's good for me, but I can't seem to stick to it. I don't touch fast food. Rather, I struggle with so-called healthier food and other processed junk that appears to be healthy but really isn't." I think there's a few tips here. First, I will say as a confession, I don't fully stay away from sugar or chocolate. I don't typically eat refined sugar, but I do sometimes eat chocolate. I do sometimes eat dessert. In fact, in the last couple of years with all of my shifts, I even sometimes eat gluten and I sometimes do eat processed food. I'm not a hundred percent off of everything.

And I think long-term the goal is actually to have that balance because it's very hard to have a complete all or nothing policy. But I don't think you start there. So I think the first part is realizing that your body is trying to tell you something. So if it's sugar, if it's craving certain things, look at any potential deficiencies, look at gut health. Those were both big keys for me as well as hormone health. And so I have to start there. You will have a very difficult time resisting if your body needs something for a particular reason. If there's a deficiency or a gut issue, it's very difficult to fight your physiology when it's something that's that core and that internal. So realize your body's trying to tell you something and start trying to test for what those things might be. I also had to shift my mindset away from avoiding certain things to consuming enough of the good things.

So making the mindset shift of from the negative and the deficiency to the positive. So I didn't wake up thinking, okay, I'm not gonna eat any junk food today. I woke up thinking, how am I going to consume all the good things my body needs today? And that alone shifted the focus because I didn't feel like I was being deprived. So I didn't crave those things as much that I would have wanted anyway. And it gave me metrics to make sure I was getting enough protein, make sure I was getting enough greens, the things that I knew that would support my hormones and my gut health. And it also made me much less hungry for those other things. And there's some key tips, like if you get enough protein early in the day, you typically have fewer cravings at night. If you get enough leafy greens, which bind to extra estrogen in the body and give you magnesium, you typically crave less sugar.

But those are slow shifts. So making those baby steps over time your body will start to naturally start to crave more of the good things.

I think meal planning is also really key when it comes to this. I meal plan, I have to, with our family, I use a tool called "Real Plans," which I'll link to in the show notes. It's an amazing tool that lets you plan based on what you already have in your house or based on food preferences or allergies and whatever nutritional criteria you have. So I use that and then I prepare food in advance as much as possible once a week so that I already have the healthy food ready to go. Which takes the decision-fatigue out of it and also takes the stress out of it.

When I was really trying to work through cravings, I found it helpful to write out ahead of time, like the day before what I was going to eat the next day to make sure I did get all those good things in. So I would write down, you know, breakfast and what it was going to be including however many ounces of vegetable, however many ounces of protein. Same with lunch, same with dinner. And that way I already had a plan so it wasn't like, okay, it's lunchtime. I could eat something healthy, but really I'd rather just eat this. I already knew that I had that ahead of time. For me also protein was a big key. There's something called the therapeutic effect of food and protein requires a lot of energy to break down. That also is really essential for a lot of reactions in the body. And for me when I was craving things, I was not getting enough protein and I had to make a conscious effort to track and then start eating enough protein and that really reduced my cravings because my body was needing certain things and I think it really only knew like it needed magnesium and only knew to crave chocolate. And so I had to kind of retrain that effect by getting enough of the actual building blocks it needed. And so that kind of went along with that mindset of hitting the good macros versus restricting. It wasn't avoiding calories or avoiding carbs, it was getting enough protein, getting enough greens, getting enough healthy fats, which for me is olive oil. Also for me, fasting helped. And a caveat here, I don't think this applies to everyone. I don't think anyone with certain hormone problems should try it at all. But for me, doing several longer fasts and then doing regular circadian fast where I didn't eat after dark at all, really helped reset my hunger hormones. I don't think that that will work the same for everyone. But it was really helpful for me.

And then on the deficiency side, I personally needed more zinc and selenium, choline and certain B vitamins and that really helped my cravings as well. And I really recommend Dr. Chris Masterjohn and his "Vitamins and Minerals 101." He has a book and a course that helps you figure out based on symptoms and experimentation what you specifically need. And he does have a whole testing protocol as well if you want to go down that road. I will link to those in the show notes. One of the most in depth and helpful resources I've ever found for that. And unusual one that also helped it is getting sunlight every morning. So as soon as possible after waking up, going outside and getting natural sunlight that helped retrain my ghrelin and leptin and hunger hormones, I think and balance out my other hormones. And I find I have less hunger and less cravings when I do that and when I get some kind of movement every day.

And then lastly, I will say the trauma aspect was also a huge key for me. I don't know if this is the case for you. I hope it's not, I hope it's not the case for most of you, but you can listen to episode 309 of this podcast and that explains that whole side of my transition and my transformation. But what I found part of that was that basically my subconscious was holding onto weight for safety. There was a reason for that and I couldn't fight my subconscious because it thought it was protecting me. And so it wasn't until I actually addressed the trauma that I could let go of that subconscious and I had to deal with that first. And what, ironically for me that meant once I fixed that I'm now actually eating more food. I need more calories and I have lost a lot of weight by doing that and I don't crave the bad stuff anymore.

From Sandra "I asked my doctor a year ago to test my magnesium levels and per the results she says it's fine, but does a standard blood test provide the best results?" and from Ivalice, I hope I'm saying that right. "I Would love to hear your opinion and thoughts on magnesium supplements. I am low, no matter how much magnesium rich food I eat. So I'm forced to supplement. I suffer from migraines, anxiety, and insomnia, which is enhanced by low magnesium. My struggle is that with all the different types out there, I'm noticing they have different effects on my body and I don't know which one is best or safest. Oxate was great for the migraines, but wrecked my gut. Trying glyconate now, but not sure it's helping with the migraines. What are your thoughts?" Okay, so several thoughts on magnesium.

I had to work up slowly because a lot of magnesium caused issues for me and even the ones that didn't mess up my digestion, they caused my skin to itch because of some histamine issues I had. But to address the blood test question, normally only about 1% of the total magnesium in the body is present in the blood. And this makes it difficult to get an accurate measurement of total magnesium from the blood test alone. However, this test can still be useful to some degree. Again, this is an area where I would recommend Dr. Chris Masterjohn's work. He actually has a lot of this on this Instagram that you can find. Dr. Chris Masterjohn, but his Vitamins and Minerals 101 is super, super helpful and he has, on his Facebook page, if you go to that and sign up for his messenger, he has an amazing free messenger course that goes through all of the vitamins and minerals and let's you figure out how to figure out which ones you specifically need.

So I would start there for figuring it out. And here's why magnesium is so important. Magnesium is responsible for over 300 reactions to the body and it impacts things like blood pressure, metabolism, immune function, and as, as she mentioned, anxiety, migraines, etc. Some experts say that magnesium deficiency is actually one of the single largest problems in our world today. And there are many reasons potentially that magnesium deficiency is so widespread from depleted soil, overuse of chemicals like chlorine and fluoride. And then some common things that we all do daily can deplete magnesium, like sugar, caffeine, stress, you know, if any of those things sound like they might be things in your life. But there's also any people with celiac or Crohn's disease are more likely to be deficient. People who consume a lot of processed foods or conventional dairy who are on city water, who have type two diabetes who don't eat a lot of leafy greens.

So lots of factors that can come into play. I personally take a supplement called MagSRT daily and I also use topical magnesium. I can link to both of those in the show notes, but I started really slowly and worked up and I feel like you can take a, kind of a symptoms based approach to magnesium levels if you're paying attention to your body, which is kind of what I did, but also do check out Chris Masterjohn's work. Regarding the question about taking magnesium and still having low levels. I personally also look at gut issues again and absorption because even though you're taking it, if the body is not absorbing it for some reason, perhaps a gut issue that could be why you're not seeing the effect. I personally found that probiotics, made a big difference for me in magnesium absorption.

I take the Just Thrive brand and I'll put a discount code for that in the show notes as well if you guys want to check it out. And K2-7 and vitamin D, which seemed to be synergistic. So those were all factors that I had to optimize to get magnesium to feel efficient to me.

So all that to say I answered. I think, all of those questions for today, there are many more. So there will definitely be more Q and A rounds and if you have questions you would like me to answer in future podcast episodes, please leave those in the show notes or DM me on Instagram or reach out with those and I will add them to the list. Still many more things I look forward to covering in future episodes. I hope this one was helpful and I would love to hear your take on any of these things as well. So if you homeschool, I'd love to hear any tips that you have, any parenting tips, especially for older teens because I'm not there yet. Or any other health related tips that you have. Always feel free to share those. I love to hear from you guys and as always, I'm so grateful to you for spending your time with me today. I'm so, so glad that you did. It's always an honor to spend this time with you and I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the Wellness Mama podcast.

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