



**Episode 354: How to Upgrade Your Brain and
Learn Anything Faster
With Limitless Author Jim Kwik**

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Katie: Hello and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com, that is Wellnesse with the E on the end, which are our new line of personal care products that work even better than their chemical alternatives. I am so excited about this episode, which is all about how to upgrade your brain and learn anything faster. And I'm here with a dear personal friend, Jim Kwik. Yes, that's his real name. And he is a widely recognized world expert in memory improvement, brain optimization, and accelerated learning. His story's incredible. After a childhood brain injury left him learning challenged and teachers told him that he had a "broken brain," he developed strategies to dramatically enhance his mental performance and is now truly one of the best in the world. He has since dedicated his life to helping others unleash their true genius and brainpower. He's the host of the top-rated "Kwik Brain" podcast and the newly, as of yesterday, in the day we record this, bestselling author of "Limitless," which is a book about upgrading your brain and how to unlock an exceptional life. His mission in life is no brain left behind.

And in this episode, he gives some practical strategies for navigating isolation, how to emerge stronger from a crisis, how to train yourself to learn anything more quickly, and how to find your sweet spot and inner genius.

It's always a wonderful episode with Jim. This one is no exception. I know that you will enjoy it as much as I did. So, without further ado, here is my dear personal friend, Jim Kwik. Best Selling Author Jim Kwik, welcome to the podcast.

Jim: So good to be here, Katie. Thank you for having me. It's good... And thank you, for everyone who's listening.

Katie: I'm so excited to chat with you. I've known you personally for years now and been a fan of your work for that long as well. And I think you have just so much knowledge and so much to share, and I'm really excited for the direction that we're going to take today. To start, for anyone who missed your first episode, I'll of course make sure it's linked so you guys can find it in the show notes, but just tell us a little bit about your story, and how you became who you are today.

Jim: Sure. A lot of people will refer to me as a "brain coach," which is interesting because that wasn't my upgrowing, upbringing. If anything, my inspiration really was my desperation. I suffered from a traumatic brain injury at the age of five. Actually in kindergarten class, I had a very bad fall. And after that, my parents said before, I was very energized, very curious, and very playful, but then I became very shut down after my injury. And where it showed up the most was in school, I had very slow processing issues, teachers would have to repeat themselves over and over again. I learned to game it and pretend I understood, but I didn't really understand. I had poor focusing skills. It took me an extra three years to learn how to read. I remember I was struggling a very particular day, slowing down a class when I was nine years old, and I was being teased by the other kids in class. And the teacher comes, I think, to my defense, but pointed to me and said, "That's the boy with the broken brain." And even though I think she was trying to explain that this was, like, kind of my handicap, all I walked out with from that was that label in my mind. I just kept on hearing it over and over again, and that label became my limit. And when I talk about becoming limitless, I use the metaphor "being in a box." And I feel like...you know, we all, in some area of our life, feel like we're not making progress, and/or maybe we feel like we're stuck. And I feel like that's where it was imprinted on me, and it really affected everything from there, with just challenges learning. Because every single time I did badly on a test, which was like all the time, every time I wasn't picked for sports, which was pretty regularly, I would always say to myself it was because I was the broken, you know, boy, the broken brain.

But at the age of 18 I was able to recover, and I came across books and mentors that helped me to be able to level up my learning. It got really bad before...you know, it got worse before it got better, where I wasn't eating and sleeping, I was so... I wanted to...my purpose, really, was to make my parents proud. And they weren't tiger parents. We had immigrate-...my dad immigrated here, in the United States, when he was 13 years old. He had lost both his parents, and they couldn't afford to feed him, so he came to the United States to live with his aunt, who I knew as my grandmother. And it was tough, you know? He didn't have the money, didn't have the resources, the education, the language. We lived in the back of the laundromat that my mother worked at. But I was really...you know, I wanted to make their sacrifice, being the oldest of three kids, siblings, I really wanted to be a good example. So I had put a lot of pressure on myself, and so I ended up hitting a wall freshman year in college. I thought being a freshman, that I could make a fresh start, and I'd pull all these all-nighters, and not eat and not sleep because I wasn't getting the grades, and it was a lot of money

to go to school, that I didn't have. And I ended up passing out in the library, fell down a flight of stairs, hit my head again, I ended up in the hospital two days later, and I just...I thought I died, and part of me probably wished...it was a very dark time.

And from there, though, through serendipity, I came across personal development, I started studying adult learning theory, multiple intelligence theory, ancient mnemonics, memory methods that people would use before there was printing presses, I discovered speed reading. And about six days into it a light switch flipped on, and I just started to just show up. It was like night and day, and I started to have better focus, I could sustain my concentration, I started to remember what I read, and understand what professors were teaching, and I could help, and help other people. And one of my very first students, she was a freshman, she read 30 books in 30 days. Not skim or scan, she really read them, and she ended up...they were books on health and wellness, and she ended up saving her mother's life from terminal cancer. And when I found out that news, I realized that if knowledge is power, learning is our superpower, and I dedicated my life for the past 28-plus years to helping people to unlock that superpower that we all have inside of us.

Katie: I love that. And I think especially for kids, that's such a cool message. I know my kids love your work as well, and they have done some of your courses with me. And I think especially that superhero wording is so special for kids, in connecting with them. And probably like you, I would guess there are other kids in today's world who have had...maybe not been told they have a broken brain, I hope not, but have been labeled with a label like ADD or ADHD, or something that...like, something not neurotypical, and then they wear that label and they kind of carry that with them. And ironically, I actually found out, about a year ago, that I technically have ADHD. And what's funny is I bet if I had been diagnosed as a kid, my life might have played out a little bit differently. But I think it actually became, in your words, a lot of a superpower, being able to use it to my advantage. And so this is one of the reasons I love talking to you, especially for all the parents listening, because especially...we know all the rates of all of these things are on the rise, a lot of parents are trying to navigate how do you help and teach a child who...like, who doesn't have a broken brain, but who has a special brain, or who has an incredible brain? How do you support them? And I love your work for that reason.

So I'd love to start a little bit almost with that side, and the homeschooling side. Because I homeschool my six kids, and when we started teaching them, I tried to think how do you best prepare kids for a world that we don't even really, maybe know what it's going to look like when they're adults, at this point? And what are the skills that make them most able to thrive in any environment when they're adults? And we settled on things like creativity, critical thinking, the ability to learn quickly. And these are, of course, things that you teach to the world, and teach to CEOs, and teach to actors and actresses, and so I'd love to start there. How can we start preparing our kids, especially now that many people are homeschooling unexpectedly these last few months?

Jim: Certainly, certainly. I mean, this goes right into the heart of my book, called "Limitless." It's all about upgrading your brain, learning anything faster, and unlocking your exceptional life. And I use that word "exceptional" because when I was in elementary school, I remember that I would spend a lot of time with the geeky kids in school, or the nerdy kids, as people would label them. And the only difference was I didn't have the grades, but I had the same interests, of comic books and video games. My fondness for superheroes came

from...I learned how to read by teaching myself by reading comic books. And something about the illustrations, and the stories of good versus evil, you know, it's that superheroes offer hope, they offer real help, and I always wanted to discover and develop my superpowers. But I remember that my specific group of friends, one day a teacher came in and said, "Good news, we're creating a group for all of you, and we're calling it MASP, More Able Student Program." MASP, these were the more able students. And I was the only one that wasn't on that list, and I created a group for myself called LASP, Less Able Student Program. And just thinking back, I can't even imagine that mindset. But these, they called them the "exceptional kids," and that's why I put exceptional on the cover of the book, that everybody can have an exceptional life, that limitless is not about being perfect, limitless is about advancing and progressing beyond what you believe is possible. And so at the heart, to answer your question, going back to children and homeschooling, I see everything through a framework that I call the "limitless model." And when there is a gap between where you are and where you want to be, whether it's learning or in any area of life, you may need to look into one of these three areas. So Katie, I could describe the framework, and then we could go micro?

Katie: Yeah, let's do that.

Jim: Okay. So what I'd love everybody to do, and we'll do this really quick, is to take out a piece of paper and take some notes. If you're not notetaking, at the very least imagine what I'm about to visualize for you to be able to explain to you. I want everyone to think of three intersecting circles, and...it's a Venn diagram. For those of you who don't know what a Venn diagram is, it's three...kind of like Mickey Mouse, two ears that intersect and overlap, and a face that overlaps with the other two. And this is the limitless model. And I believe that...let's think about...let's make this very practical. Let's think about an area that you feel you are limited, where you're not making progress, or you feel maybe your child is not making progress in a specific area. For you, listening, it might be in a relationship, it might be in your career, it might be in your health and wellness, it could be in your income, it could be in your impact. It could be in your own personal learning, maybe your memory or reading. Or it could be for your child. As you're doing this, so when you're thinking about it being in that box where you're not making progress, that box is defined by three dimensions, right? It's three-dimensional. And the three forces that keep you in that box are also the same three forces that will liberate you out of that box, or your child out of that box, and these are the three circles that are represented. So, these are the three forces. The first one is our mindset. And this is something you're very familiar with, is these are things like our assumptions and attitudes about something, about the world, about our children, about the education system, about ourselves. What would fall in this category, in this circle, things like what you believe is possible. What would fall in the circle is what you believe you're capable of. Or this could be your child, what your child thinks is possible and what your child thinks they're capable of. What you believe you deserve would fall underneath your mindset.

So, that's the first, and I'm going to go through three circles, three Ms. I always alliterate, make everything acronyms. They're just easy to memorize, right? The last M, just to fast-forward, are methods. And this book primarily was a book on methods before I turned it in. It was all about, you know, the things you mentioned, how to read faster, how to remember facts, figures, foreign languages, how to be a critical thinker, how to focus and concentrate. These are things that we take for granted, but we're not taught necessarily in school. School teaches us what to learn, what to study and what to read, what to remember, what to focus on, what to think, but not how to learn, and how to study, and how to focus, and how to remember, and how, really, to

read effectively, and how to think, certainly. And so the book, before I turned it in, it was a really good self-help manual on how to do meta-learning, learning how to learn, for any age or stage of life. And then I asked myself this question before I emailed it in, I said, "Will 100% of the people who read this book get the results they were hoping for?" And my honest answer was no. And that was really kind of hard for me to reconcile because, you know, the book was done, and everyone that looked at it said, "This is amazing. This is, like, a blueprint for accelerated learning," but I wasn't happy with it because I want people to get the results. And so I went back, and I added two extra circles, if you will, or sections to the book, and the first one is your mindset. Because the challenge is if I give somebody a method on how to memorize things in biology class, but they're...and maybe that's the method, but their mindset is "I'm not smart enough" or "I'm broken" or "I have a horrible memory," then that's going to affect this, and it will still keep a child or an adult inside that box, that mindset, so we have to address that.

The second M is your motivation. And motivation is interesting because a lot of people feel motivation is something that's always temporary. It's you wake up and you hope you have motivation, or you go to a seminar and you jump up and down, and you pump your fists and you clap, and you just see you're so motivated to do X, Y, Z tomorrow. But the next day comes and, you know, X, Y, Z doesn't happen. And so I figured out a formula for motivation, not only for adults but also for children, for any human being, and that formula is P times E times S3. So whether you want to be able to motivate yourself or motivate a child, these are the three ingredients, P times E times S3. And just very briefly, whether it's motivating a child to clean their room or to be able to study, or you're getting yourself to, you know, do a little exercise today or meditate, or you know, go do some red light or cold therapy, you know, you have to...you need these three ingredients to be consistent. Because motivation, the only proof somebody is motivated, yourself, your children, anybody, your employees, your team is if they're doing something. It's not what you say. You could say you're motivated, but that doesn't mean it. And if you feel motivated, but if you're not doing it, it still doesn't count. So what I did was I realized that...I did this thought experiment, and I said, okay, I realize that human motivation is important because a lot of people know the methods, but they still don't do those things. Whether it's in their business and marketing, investments, and you know, in their personal, you know, performance and their child-rearing, but they don't do it because common sense is not common practice. So, what are the keys?

So I did this thought experiment saying, okay, if we're going to build the ultimate motivated human being, this is the ultimate motivated human being, their drive is unrelentless, they won't stop, and what are the ingredients? And I said the first thing that we need is P, and the P stands for purpose. And I don't mean a life purpose, although I do touch on that in the book pretty well in detail. I mean having a reason to do that activity, because reasons reap results. And not just to understand it cognitively, a child or an adult doesn't...it's not just knowing that this is good for you and the rewards that will come from it, but you have to feel that. Because if you don't feel it...we're not logical as much as we are biological. And when you think about dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, endorphins, this chemical soup that we are, we're motivated by the emotions. In fact, we learn better when emotions are in play, rather than when they're not. And so how do you tap into more of that purpose as you allow yourself to feel, and the rewards that will come from that activity, and also maybe even the consequence of, or the discomfort that comes from not doing that activity? For example, I have a friend who wakes up at 4:30 every morning, and they work out. And I was wondering, because I was just...you know, people's mindset, I'm always curious. So I was like, "Are you a morning person?" He was like, "No, absolutely not." I'm like, "Well, then you must really love working out, if you wake up every morning at

4:30." He's like, "No, I actually hate working out more than I enjoy waking up in the morning," and I'm like, "Wow."

So, some people think you have to enjoy that activity, but it's not necessarily true, but you do need a reason to do it. Meaning that I take...part of my morning routine, for people who have listened to my podcast or my videos, is I take a cold shower. I met Wim Hof over seven years ago, and I've been taking cold showers and ice baths for seven years. I've never missed a day, ever. And truth be told, I really, I grew up in the Northeast, I dislike the cold. I really dislike the cold. But I do it, and I never miss it because I have reasons, because I know how I feel afterwards. It's like, the best nervous system reset for me. I feel even better than, you know, having coffee. It lowers inflammation in my body, I find, you know, amazing levels of growth, when I could find calm in chaos or cold. And so I never miss it because I feel the reasons, you know? And then just one last example is recently I met an acquaintance, and I saw somebody recently that I know not really closely, but they looked amazing, but they weren't always like that. You know, they had a really compromised lifestyle in terms of smoking and eating and stuff like that, and they ended up having a heart attack, but afterwards, they still didn't make any changes. And then they did, and I wanted to know, "Hey, what motivated you to do that, and to prioritize your wellness?" And he said that it was this daughter, you know, who's young, and you know, in elementary school, and one day she was crying and crying, and he wanted to find out why. And you know, she said that she wanted him to be there when she had children, and you know, to walk her down the aisle, that kind of thing. And it just...he felt that purpose, and has been consistent ever since, motivated.

So, that's purpose. So then when I'm going back in this experiment, I'm thinking, okay, if some human being just has that purpose, will they always be motivated? And I said, no, they could be missing the E, and the E stands for energy. Meaning, going back to, let's say, a simple thing like exercise, maybe you feel the purpose and the reasons to exercise, but you have a newborn and you haven't slept in three nights, you're probably not going to be as motivated because you're going to be exhausted, right? And maybe you know leaders are readers, and it's amazing if somebody has decades of experience, they put it into a book and you can sit down and read that book in a few days, and you could, you know, download decades in days, and you feel the benefit and you feel the purpose. You could be an expert, you can make more money, you could serve more people, you could make better decisions. You can feel it. But maybe you ate a big processed meal and you're in a food coma, and you lack the energy, you might not be motivated to read or study that day. Or your child might not be motivated to read and study that day because they lack the energy. And then my mind went, finally, so okay, is there anything missing? If somebody, an adult or a child has purpose, they feel it, they have plentiful energy, you know, because we talk about all the things in the book, everything, great brain diet to optimizing your sleep and stress management and all those things, will they always be motivated? And I said, no. The last thing missing, S3, small, simple steps.

And I realized what keeps people sometimes unmotivated, even if they have purpose, even if they have an abundance of energy is they don't know what to do, or that thing that they're thinking about is way too intimidating. It's like oh, I want to create, you know, the next million-dollar business online, you know, I want to meet my soulmate and live happily ever after, whatever their ambitions are, they haven't broken it down into achievable steps. And how you find your small, simple step, S3, is asking a simple question like what is the tiniest action I could take right now that will give me progress towards this goal, where I cannot fail. What's the tiniest action I could take right now to give me progress towards this goal, where I can't fail? And so simple

things like maybe working out and doing pilates or SoulCycle or whatever for an hour is just too difficult, it's too intimidating, maybe putting on your running shoes, that's your small, simple step. Maybe it's not reading an hour a day or 45 minutes a day, maybe it's opening up the book, or maybe it's reading the first line, you know, on the page. And so inch by inch, it's a cinch, yard by yard, it's way too hard. And that's really the formula we have for motivation.

And then finally, going into your question, the last...now that these first two Ms are in place, and you know, we have the mindset that, you know, a child believes it's possible, or they believe they deserve it, they believe they're capable of it, that's where we unfold some of the LIEs to learning. I think there's seven...I've accumulated over the past twenty years, like, seven core LIEs that the majority of the population, we subscribe to. And a LIE, for me, stands for a Limited Idea Entertained. It's not necessarily true, but it's a limited idea that we choose to give energy. And so we unlimit those, you know, we show people how to find purpose, and feel it through exercises that they do, and then, you know, optimize their energy, break things down. Then we teach them the methods of speed reading, and critical thinking and everything. But the "aha" comes, as you're looking at the diagram right now, the three Ms, there are also three Is. Where mindset crosses over with motivation, you have inspiration. Where mindset crosses over with motivation, you have inspiration. Now, you have mindset experts, you have mindset books. One of my favorite books is by Carol Dweck, it's called "Mindset." You have motivational speakers, you have motivational experts, motivational books. And you also have, where they crossover, inspirational speakers, and inspirational books, and inspirational movies. And usually, and what they do is they change your mindset maybe about what's possible, and they open it up a little bit, and they also give you some energy or some motivation.

But the problem is you're inspired, you have inspiration, but you don't know what to do, right? And so you're lacking the methods because it's not crossing over with the methods. Where mindset crosses over with methods, you have ideation. Meaning it's your mindset, it's in your head, you believe it's possible, you believe you're capable of it, you believe you even deserve it. And methods, you know, the process for speed reading or learning languages, or you know, supporting your kids with their studies, but you don't have the motivation, so it only stays an idea. So, that's an ideation. And then finally, where you have motivation and methods, you have implementation. You're motivated for purpose, energy, and you have the process, you know exactly how to study, and exactly how to concentrate, and exactly how to actively listen. But where you're stuck, you could still be stuck in that box because you're only going to be able to achieve as much as your mindset allows. And so, you might not believe it's possible for you, you might not believe you could earn that much money, you might not believe you deserve that, you know, that result. And now, where all three Is and all three Ms converge right in the middle, you have the fourth I, which is integration. Integration, like integer or integral means you're whole, and so that's just who you are. In that middle space, right in the middle, that's the state of limitless, and that's really the goal.

So what I'm working with is whether...again, anyone of any age or any stage of life, I'm looking at through this framework, because... And everyone, I invite you to do the same thing, that if you're stuck somewhere in that box, or your child is struggling in that box, it allows you, with these distinctions... Because unless you take the invisible and you make it visible, you take something that's intangible and it becomes more concrete, then it allows you to address the real problem, where is the constraint here, you know, where's the false boundary or border? Is it in their mindset, you know, do they not believe it's possible, do they not believe that it's possible

for them, do they not believe they deserve it, and so on? Or do they not have purpose? Do they these children not know why they're studying this specific subject? Is not relevant to them, do they not feel the rewards or the consequences? Or do they not have the energy? Are they staying up late at night, are they eating poor, processed food, are they stressed, or are they spending time around people that's, you know, energy vampires that are stealing their energy? Or are they nutrient deficient, you know, and should they get a nutrient profile done? Because if they're lacking, you know, certain key nutrients, your brain's not going to perform, right? Or maybe they're in a very cluttered environment, and we know cleanliness, you know, is a good indicator for...your external world is a reflection of your internal world, you know, and so it gives you clarity and gives you energy. Or maybe they haven't broken it down into a small, simple step, you know? Maybe what they need to do is break it down. Or maybe they're using poor methods, poor methods of memory, of just repetition over and over and over again. Or maybe poor methods of reading, which is, you know, regressing and back skipping, and losing focus, or sub-vocalizing. maybe they have to upgrade their methods.

So my message for everyone here is don't, with everything going on now in the world, do not downgrade your dreams to fit this current situation. Instead, upgrade your mindset, your motivation, and your methods to be able to meet those dreams.

Katie: I love that. And I think we're navigating a really, probably unique time for a lot of this, and just with so much uncertainty going on right now in general. And I want to get into that a little bit more later in the episode, but I feel like even for adults right now it's really difficult to maintain focus with just so much bombardment from all aspects right now. So, I love the mindset motivation and methods. I think that is so key, and like, reframes it for a lot of people. How can we, if we have those pieces in place, how can we improve our focus and our concentration?

Jim: So, focus and concentration is actually...so, the book is actually three books in one. So I went back into the drawing board, and I loved the methods, but I added a whole section on mindset and a whole section on motivation. But in the third section, where methods actually starts, the very first chapter in that section we talk about the five superpowers, the very first one is focus and concentration. Because without that, you don't have anything, right? Even when people come to me and they have challenges with their memory and they blame their retention, it's often not their retention, it's often more them paying attention. And so without focus... Now, the metaphor I use in the book is more like... It's interesting. If you go outside and it's a nice day out, the sun shining, and when you were a child you used to play with those magnifying glasses, and you would burn leaves and things like that. And when you look through a magnifying glass, it's interesting because that focal point is very...it's very bright. And isn't it interesting that we use that word, "bright," to describe people that we feel are, you know, smart. And maybe they're not smarter, maybe they're just better focused. And that's really the metaphor that I use, that if you take a bulb that has all the same...you might not even see it if the sun's out, you know, and you're in your bedroom or in your living room, but if you focus that bulb, it could create a laser that could burn through, you know, maybe a wall. And that's the power of focus, to be able to get things done.

We know that...and I've interviewed so many individuals on this, on my show and just in person for my own research, that concentration, that you could actually practice concentration, that a lot of people, this is

something that you could learn and something you could practice, something you could get better at. Yet most people do not practice concentration, what they do is they practice being distracted. And so if we're looking at this as a metaphor, like a muscle, then distraction is a muscle, and so is concentration. But the thing is, the thing that we're doing the most is what we're getting better at. And you know, you and I have had this conversation before but just as a quick reminder, one of the things that is building our distraction muscles is our smart device, right? Especially that one thing I tell people not to do it, that I've been telling them for years, just for the first half an hour of the day, don't touch your phone. Because when you wake up you're in this relaxed state of awareness, you're very suggestible, and if the first thing you do is touch your phone, every ring, ping, ding, you know, social media alert, new message, it just trains your distraction. It trains your distraction muscles first thing in the morning, and then you wonder why you can't focus when you read, you wonder why you have trouble focusing on the Zoom meeting and your mind goes elsewhere, because we've built those muscles. Now, the good news is we could also build our focus and concentration muscles just the same, and that's wonderful. You know, by the way, the second reason why you don't pick up your phone in the morning, just to address it, it's not just, you know, your to-do list, it should be on the top of your not-to-do list, is not only does it rewire your brain to be distracted, it also rewires your brain to be reactive, which means that you're just responding to fires, or you're on the defense. And you don't want to start your day just automatically teaching yourself to be reacting and fighting fires and everything. Because we all know that we've had a voicemail or social media message, a voicemail message that just ruins our day, and it just hijacks our mind, and so we don't want to be reactive to things.

So going back to this, there was a study done at Princeton University that found that multiple stimuli present in our visual field at the same time, they compete for neural representation by mutually suppressing their evoked activity throughout the visual cortex. Now, what does that mean? It's just whenever you're multitasking...we know, like, multitasking is a myth, that actually going from one thing to another, we're not actually doing them in parallel, we are actually competing for...you know, our nervous system is competing for the same kind of resources. And so what you waste is time, you make more mistakes...because it could take anywhere from five to twenty minutes to regain your focus and your flow. And also, you not only waste time, you actually burn glucose in the brain, so you're wasting energy also, which is as important, I think, as your time. And so one of the things to remaining focused, to be able to maintain and reduce the level of distraction is to train your brain to focus on one thing at a time. And it's that simple, but it's that difficult, right? So I'm not saying this is an easy thing to do, but in the book...and I'm going to rephrase the whole book, I quote, a French philosopher in the book that says this, "Life is a C between B and D." "Life is C between B and D." And people are probably thinking that I'm speaking in code or tongues. B stands for Birth, D stands for Death, C, life, stands for Choice. And it's those choices that we're making every single day that really, we could think about, like, our life right now, where we are, a snapshot of where we are right now as the sum total of all the choices we've made up to this point? You know, where are we going to live, and what are we going to eat, what are we going to feed our mind, or what are we going to do for our career, who are we going to spend time with, you know? Big decisions, and small, small decisions. And I truly believe that right now, that difficult times can define you, difficult times can diminish you, or difficult times can develop you. But ultimately, you decide. It comes back to the power of choice.

So when I'm talking about distraction at a meta-level, because we always choose. Whatever we're doing on a regular basis, we're getting better at. And focusing on one thing, and not distracting ourselves with, you know, some ring, ping, ding social media alert or app notification, to be able to minimize that and practice, instead,

focus, like, even something like what I've talked about before, simple exercises in the morning. Instead of checking your phone first thing in the morning, like, brushing your teeth with the opposite hand, or eating with the opposite hand. It doesn't necessarily take more time to do it, but the reason why I do that in my morning routine, or I teach people to do it is because they have to focus on that activity. Besides the fact that if you use different parts of your body it stimulates different parts of your brain. We know this, that there were studies done at Oxford University saying things like jugglers have bigger brains, if you actually learn how to juggle it will create more white matter, and that as a body moves, the brain grooves, that one side of your body controls the other, one side of your brain controls the opposite side of your body. But it's not a one-way connection, it's a two-way, so that way, using different parts of your body actually stimulates different parts of your brain. Not only do you get that benefit first thing in the morning when you're brushing your teeth, but it forces you to be present. And so when you're doing it, you have to pay attention, and you're training your attention muscles. So it doesn't have to take time. Just like even when I talk about taking a cold shower, it doesn't take more time, it's just replacing something, you know? Taking a cold shower instead of a warm shower or a hot shower. So, what I would say is concentration is something that you could develop, it's something that's a muscle, and it's something that you could get more fit at. And just by making conscious choices throughout the day, to focus on one thing at a time.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's so important. And you're right, most people don't even think about it, like, we're just so tied to our devices, and we're constantly distracted, which is exhausting. And I know for moms, it leads to that overwhelm, when you're just trying to juggle all of that, all the open loops at one time. And so just making those small shifts in focus can make a big difference. Even if you're doing the same amount of things, and you can't not have to get everything done, just being able to close some of those loops or not have them all going at once can make such a big difference.

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I think right now we're also in a really unique time, as far as learning to navigate kind of new social dynamics. And I don't like to use the word "social distancing," because I keep telling people even if we have to physically distance, we need to figure out how to double-down on emotional connection and social connection. But we are definitely much more isolated than we've ever had to be before, and I know I've read a little bit in different psychology journals about how that can have a really dramatic impact on the brain. So from what you know, like, how is this changing human interaction, how is it changing our brains, and how can we mitigate that?

Jim: Yeah, let's unpack that. I absolutely agree with you that words have powers, and that words affect your brain. So like, you and I are being social right now, but we're physically distant, but we're not being socially distant, and we're not being mentally distant. And we're not being emotionally distant. Because those kind of challenges could lead to loneliness, and we know loneliness, you know, is on the rise, and loneliness definitely has an effect on your nervous system, especially for our mental health, and it becomes a very big challenge. You know, my recommendation for people, and the metaphor I'm using is that of a cocoon, right? We're coming from a caterpillar spinning a cocoon and becoming a butterfly, we're going through a metamorphosis. And all that is is a life cycle. And we feel like we're going through a life cycle right now, and this is a great metaphor for transformation because a butterfly is such a profound symbol for change. And when we are cocooning or being physically distant, when we could be alone, you know, we could be alone with our thoughts, which is, you know, unique for a lot of people, and alone with our fears, alone creeps into your doubts. You know, you can be feeling alone, going back to that loneliness, and sometimes it's tough because the truth is, you know, a lot of us have a tendency to cling to a world that was rather than, you know, being in the present, and progressing and continuing the cycle. And while the beauty is in the butterfly, the growth happens in the cocoon.

So I could think of five quick things that people can be doing to mitigate this challenge, and they're five Cs. Now first of all, these are just suggestions. Who's to say...I mean, we're going through an unprecedented time, and people could experience a wide range of emotions, and that's part of the human experience. So who's to say, for me, if somebody wants to spend five hours and watch Netflix, and binge watch that, and...everyone do their own. My primary belief for everything, that I wish I could have installed in myself when I was a child with that broken brain, my number one...like, if somebody asked me, like, if I could just have everybody believe one thing, it would be that we are 100% responsible for our life. And from there, that's a meta belief that I feel like will have a ripple effect, you know? I feel like that would have a very powerful effect on children, that were not thermometers, we're thermostats. The thermometer just reacts to everything, and it's just forced to react to everything that's going on in the environment, as opposed to a thermostat, which can...it doesn't react, it engages the environment, but then it sets their intention or their goal, and then, you know, it imposes more of its will to be able to affect the environment and make positive change.

And so going back to "Life is a C between B and D," C is choice, five choices. I would say that would be healing and nourishing, because what you nourish flourishes. This would be a great time for clarity. And by the way, when I say these five things, they don't have to take, like, five hours to do. I'm saying even if you could spend five minutes doing any of these things, it would help you move in the right direction. It would be a small, simple step, like we talked about before, that inch by inch, it's a cinch, that we don't have to overcomplicate it. Because thinking is good, but overthinking and wanting it to be perfect, that's just...we know that's not going to happen, right? Because life, like learning, is just messy. So C, the first C, and I'll make them easy to remember, is clarity. I would say that solitude is a wonderful opportunity for self-reflection, that sometimes when you're going 100 miles an hour, we can't take a pause and just ask ourselves, "Am I going in the right direction in our life?" And so maybe the...you know, a time for ourselves when we're cocooning, we could take a little bit of time and self-reflect. You know, and that could come through talk therapy, that could come from journaling, that could come from meditation, whatever your practice is. I like the power of questions because I feel like when you ask new questions, you get more clear answers for clarity. A good guiding question could be what's most important to me in life? Like, sometimes we're going for months or years, you know, with the same...we never check in with ourselves. Like right now, just what's most important to me in my life, what's most important to me at this stage in my career, what's most important to me with my family, what's most important to me with my time and impact? And then once you have those things that, you know, we call "values," once you have your values in line, then ask yourself another question. Are my actions aligned with those things, those answers, those values? Are the things I'm doing each day fulfilling those values? And maybe if they're not, then we maybe either have to reevaluate our values, or reevaluate our actions. Because then, because if they're not aligned, that's where we sabotage ourselves, that's where we take a step forward and take two leaps back, when our actions are not aligned with the things that are most important to us.

So number one, clarity, number two...and again, this could be also for your children. So you could apply this towards yourself, you could apply this towards your family. The second thing I would say is care, and this is one that you cover in abundance. So, we know that self-care is not selfish. And my contribution here would be yes, and in the book we talk about the best brain foods, and optimizing your sleep, and stress management. I believe it's just not just physical hygiene, we all know we should be washing our hands, and sanitizing everything, and six feet. My thing for care is just be conscious of your mental hygiene. And my thing with this is, just because we work with students, this is my...you know, going on 29 years, almost three decades, and I spend time with everyone from children with severe learning challenges to, you know, aging adults who have challenges with dementia. I lost, again, my grandmother to Alzheimer's, and everyone in between. And I would just say one of the things is control what you're putting in, the input. Meaning that your mind has an algorithm like Instagram and Facebook has an algorithm, that if you just liked and commented on every cat post, the algorithm is going to show you a lot more cats, and it's going to skew things in terms of your reality, and say, like, there are a lot of cats out there. Same thing with your mind. If you're just watching the news all the time, and watching... And understand that media is a business, and if it bleeds, it leads. They know that you are the ultimate product that they're offering their advertisers, and so they want you to show up and spend time.

But if you feel like you're spending...and now, this is for you to determine, it's your personal choice and responsibility, if you feel like you're spending too much time there, let me just remind you it's just like that algorithm on Facebook, that if you're just feeding your brain darkness and what's threatening, you're just going to...your mind is going to feed you that same algorithm, and you're going to feel like that's everything in

life. And what happens is, consciously, you can't pay attention to a lot of things at once, and so you're not shining the light on opportunity, you're not shining light on what you call the blessings in your life, what you could be grateful for, you're not shining the light on possibility and where is the gift in this? And so I'm just saying that there should be some kind of harmony there. And so I would say, and this is the reason why for your brain, chronic stress shrinks your brain. When you're always in fight or flight, you know, and all this cortisol, adrenaline, it's not...or your children are, that's not a good place to study, it's not a good place to take a test, it's not a great place to perform. And that's what chronic stress does. So chronic fear, we know in the areas of psycho- and neuro-immunology that chronic fear, it actually compromises your immune system, makes you more susceptible to colds, to flus, to viruses. And so where is that fear coming from is what we're feeding our minds, and just know that there's an algorithm there. Just like you're training focus or you're training distraction, you could train your mind to look at what's wrong. You could also train your brain to look at what you could be grateful for.

And I also think gratitude should be part of everyone's self-care process, just like self-love. Part of self-love is looking in the mirror and falling back in love with the person that's looking back at you, that's been through so much but is still standing. Part of self-care and self-love is knowing when you say yes to somebody or something, you're not saying no to yourself. Part of self-care is setting borders and boundaries on the things that are important to you, protecting your time, protecting, you know, your emotions, protecting your mindset, you know, also as well. And obviously, what's being fed into your children's brain also, to be able to stand guard. And so that's what I'm talking about for care. And gratitude is amazing because it's the antidote to fear. You know, if you ask yourself this simple question, like, what if the only things you had in your life tomorrow were the things you expressed gratitude for today? I mean, that would be an interesting thought experiment. Because we know gratitude rewires your brain for positivity, for peace, what if...if you want to feel wealthy in a time of economic disturbance, what if you made a list of all the things you have in your life that money can't buy, and make that list, and that trains your focus, just like training would be on the media for all the things that are just kind of dark and hazardous. So, that'd be part of care.

The third C...clarity, care, is contribution. And I think that one of the best ways of talking about overcoming fear, and for yourself, for your kids, for your family, is service. What can you do together to contribute some of your time, your talent, your treasure? Because that, just like gratitude is the antidote to fear, so is service and contribution, you know? So for us, we are donating 100% of our proceeds from our book to Alzheimer's research, and to build schools for children who have no access, and healthcare and clean water. For us on social media, we're doing some lives on Facebook and Instagram, on teaching kids how to learn, the one subject I feel like is the most important because schools are not in session. You know, so how can you contribute in your time, talent or treasure? And it doesn't have to be huge. It could be calling on a neighbor that you know is a little bit vulnerable, it could be finding somebody and making sure they have food, the people that are working on the front lines, you know, what's your unique way of contributing? And then number four, after clarity, care, contribution, is creativity. I mean, this is...and I mean, you've heard this before, and maybe it's not new to you, but I'm just...and again, a coach sometimes just tells you somethings which you, you know, need to hear, what could be supportive of you. Even before what's going on in the world, there were jobs and opportunities that were going to machines, right, that are being automated, that are going to artificial intelligence. And what makes us truly human and valuable in today's society? I really do believe, that we're creators, and you know, the future belongs to the creators.

And so what have you always wanted to create? Because the limit, when I talk about limitless, I believe the limitless resource we have on planet Earth is human potential, that the sky is not the limit, and you know, our mind is the limit. There's no limit to your creativity, there's no limit to your imagination, there's no limit to us coming together, there's no limit to human determination, right? And so how do we be able to unlock more of those resources? You can be more creative. What has always been in the back of your mind, like a splinter in your brain, that you've always wanted to create? Now is an opportune time to write music, or to do your art, or your poetry, or to write that book, or start that blog, or make that video, or start that podcast, or start that business, right? Whatever you've always wanted to create. And you've heard, like with these memes, which are true, like, it was during the Great Plague that William Shakespeare created "Macbeth," created "Anthony and Cleopatra." It was during the plague, when they closed down London, that you know, at one of the universities there, that Isaac Newton had to go home, he had to physically distance himself, and he was sitting underneath the tree and an apple fell on his head, right, and he came up with the theories of motion, the theories of gravity. And I'm not saying we have to create those, but what's something that we could be creative, you know? Because I also think that some people say that they're burnt out because they're doing too much. Maybe you're not burnt out because you're doing too much, maybe you're burnt out because you're doing too little of the things that make you feel alive. And I think creative expression turns people's spark on and helps them feel alive.

And then finally, the last C, you have clarity, you have care, contribution, creativity, I would say is capability. Now is a wonderful time to learn, and for your children also to learn. And what have you always wanted...you have your to-do list, and we now know you should have a not-to-do list, and what's on top of your not-to-do list is touching your phone the first half an hour of the day, which I know is very difficult, but also a to-learn list. What's on your to-learn list? Because right now, it's an exciting time because we have unfettered access to everything. I mean, if you could learn anything, Spanish, Salsa, speed reading, there's a podcast for everything, there's a YouTube video for everything. And so what have you always wanted to read? And I just, I think reading is so important, again because I'm an advocate for reading. My teachers would have been blown away if I read a book, much less wrote a book, and I feel like reading is to your mind what exercise is to your body. And so I think leaders are readers, and to schedule thirty minutes of reading a day I think is very important for us. But what's on your to-read list? And so what have you always wanted to learn? And again, you don't have to dedicate hours upon hours. I'm not saying this should take a lot of time. Small, simple step, you know? What is...you know, spending ten minutes with yourself reflecting, getting that meditation time in or doing a little journaling, asking yourself that question, what's most important to me in my career, what's most important to me in my family, in my time, in my life, you know, and are my actions aligned with it? Five, ten minutes of just care that you wouldn't normally do, you know, which could be going for a walk, or doing some breathing exercises for yourself, or taking...you know, you could be doing a little stretching for yourself, you know? What's something small? What's something small you can do to contribute, like that little phone call to or FaceTime to somebody who's a little lonely, or someone who's elderly? And what can you do for your creativity? Maybe you could just write for ten minutes. Ten minutes of writing, or something else that makes you come alive.

And then finally, five or ten minutes of reading, or listening to a podcast, or doing something that feeds your mind. And you know, these are the five Cs. And I would say, if I was to add to it, you know, this is the reason

why I love your show and I love your community, that can be also another one, another C is community, it's connect with people. You know, don't use this time, you know, as an excuse to isolate because, you know, life is not here to be led just solo, it's social. It's not just your neurological networks, it's your social networks, you know, and who you spend time with is who you become. And you know, and that's why I love your show. Because when do people get consistently encouraged and challenged and educated and people cheering them on? And if you haven't found that person in your life, then be that person for somebody else, and especially be that person for you. And that's the metaphor I would use. And then consistency...I could go on forever, but now I'm just thinking about it, structure, when you're home and you're maybe not used to being home, adding structure for your children and structure and consistency for yourself is so important. So you know, define that first hour of the day, define that last hour of the day, the first hour to be able to get your mind right, get your children's mind right, that last hour to really be able to go into that parasympathetic sleep, rest, digest, recover. But add structure where you can because the brain likes to have consistency. And my thoughts on this is it's just like when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became that butterfly. And sometimes we have to fight through some bad days during some of the best days of our life. And if you're struggling, you know, my prayers...and I wish you safety, I wish you security, I wish you wholeness, whatever you need the most right now. And remember, you inspire people with your grit, and your grace, and you're stronger than you think, more than whatever you're facing right now.

Katie: I love that, and I'm right there with you. I think this is a very unique opportunity if we look at it like that versus...and with every challenge, certainly there is opportunity. And I hope that we can all keep that focus on the positive, keep gratitude front of mind. And also, I hope that some of these things that are happening because of the unusual circumstance right now will stick around. I mean, we are all spending more time with family, or a lot of us are, people are gardening more than they ever have, people are cooking at home more than they ever have. I think there's some beautiful lessons in this. And parents are, a lot of parents are moving toward homeschooling, even...I've heard a lot of parents mentioning maybe not sending their kids back to school, but being able to adapt and learn at home. And so I think it's opening up some unique possibilities for all of us, and like you said, if we can keep that as the focus and view this as a time of metamorphosis, I think you're right, we could all emerge stronger, and hopefully more connected with stronger community and stronger families at the end of this. And at the very least, we have to get through this anyway, so why not make the best of it and make it an opportunity for growth, since we're all here anyway? And like anytime I talk to you, of course, Jim, our time flies by because you're such a pleasure to talk to. I'll make sure I link to the book in the show notes, but of course, "Limitless" is available anywhere books are sold. But where else can people find you, if they want to keep learning and keep in touch with you?

Jim: I appreciate that so much. The book is really my legacy. People don't know this, but I got into an accident where I almost died a few years ago, and that was...because people ask, like, why did you wait three decades to write a book? And it made me think about what I'd leave behind. And so I wanted it to be complete, that if people just found it that they'd be able to get the results. And so people can go to limitlessbook.com, and we have a bunch of free gifts, including a ten-day speed reading memory program that will just... I want this to be the most read book that people buy, you know? Because people are really good at buying books, and they sit on your shelf, and they become shelf-help, not self-help, but people aren't really good at reading the books. And so I wanted to get people attending the programs so that they would actually be excited, and have the skills to read it. Because I think a lot of people don't read because they're not...they don't feel comfortable doing it, it's not a fun process for them. And then we do a four-week book club with everybody, and it's all just

included when people buy it on limitlessbook.com. And there are four sections to the book, and we spend one week per section, and three of those sections are the mindset, motivation and methods.

Where people could connect is on social media. Just like yourself, I'm very active. Everything is at @JimKwik, K-W-I-K. I would actually invite people, I challenge them, you know...and then also our podcast, obviously, you could just listen to Jim Kwik, you know, on any of your podcast apps, you can just search for it. And we have a show, about 200 episodes, just 15 minutes long on how to remember names and languages, and study, and change your habits. The last place what I would say is I would challenge everybody, because I think one of the best ways of learning something is by teaching it, and to take a screenshot of this episode and tag Katie, tag myself, I am @JimKwik, K-W-I-K, and share your big "aha". Because when you share something that you've just learned, you're more likely to integrate it and learn it better. Because again, when you teach it, you learn it twice. And that way your friends and your family, your followers, they could see it. And if you tag us both, I could see it. I'm happy to repost some of, you know, some of the ones that you post. And also, and I'll actually gift one person, just for fun, a copy of the book. Because I just appreciate...I appreciate your community so much, Katie. Like, we have known each other for quite some time, and you're a real force for good. You're an inspiring, you know, force of nature. Because I think this is so even more necessary than ever before, and I love your perspective in that, you know, where is the gift in this, you know, because it's never all dark. And that's coming back to the through-line with this entire episode, is that we have a choice. We always have a choice of what we're going to focus on, what things are going to mean, what are we going to do, and be that butterfly. And be that living example for your children, that...

You know, I have this...I'll end with this. I have a fear of heights because of...you know, that's why you see me skydive and do zero-G and those crazy stuff on Instagram and Facebook, because I fell off a roof. That was one of my traumatic brain injuries. And when the butterfly comes out, you... I saw one the other day up in a tree, and I do these games where I'm just trying to, like, if I was that butterfly, what would I be feeling right now? Because that butterfly looks really calm and confident. But I realized it's calm and it's confident not because it puts its trust in the tree branch, that butterfly is calm and confident because it puts its trust in its own wings. And I think the process that we go through is we need to know ourselves, and we need to trust ourselves, we need to love ourselves, and then we really, we need to be ourselves. And I think that's a formula for real fulfillment.

Katie: I love that. I think that's the perfect place to end. And I'll make sure that there are links to everything that you mentioned in the show notes, at wellnessmama.fm, including to your book website so people can get the speed reading program and all those bonuses, which is awesome. I really appreciate you sharing that with the community. And thank you so much, Jim, for your time today, and for all the work that you put in. I know that this book, like you mentioned, was a labor of love for many, many years. And I had the chance to read it, it's absolutely incredible. I definitely encourage all of you guys to pick up a copy. But thanks for the time today, Jim. It's always a pleasure.

Jim: Katie, you're the best. Thank you, everybody.

Katie: And thanks, as always, to you 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.