Episode 366: The Man Who Forgot to Die on Remembering to Live With Khalil Rafati
Child: Welcome to my Mommy’s podcast.

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This podcast is sponsored by Alitura skincare. This a company founded by my friend (and previous podcast guest) Andy, who formulated these products to heal after a horrific accident left him with scars on his face. He mixed some of the most nutrient dense ingredients on the planet to create truly natural products that feed and benefit the skin, leaving it nourished and in my experience, hydrated and younger looking. I know from talking to Andy that he has literally gone all over the world to source some of these ingredients and is meticulous about testing them for quality and finding the combination that works the best. Even the name, Alitura, means feeding and nourishing in latin. My personal favorites are the mask and the gold serum, but all of their products are great. Here’s a tip with the mask... mix with apple cider vinegar instead of water for an extra boost and to deep clean pores. I use the mask a few times a week and I use the gold serum at night and after sun exposure to keep my skin nourished and hydrated. Check out these and all of their products at alituranaturals.com/wellnessmama and use the code WELLNESSMAMA for 20% off and free shipping.

Katie: Hello. And welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and wellesse.com, that's wellness with an E on the end, which is my new line of completely safe non-toxic personal care products that benefit your body from the outside in.

I am so excited to share this episode with you. I'm here with Khalil Rafati who is a speaker, an author, and an entrepreneur. He's also the owner of SunLife Organics, which is a company I love in LA. Every time I visit there, I make sure to visit. They're a chain of juice and smoothie bars. He also owns Riviera Recovery, which is a transitional living facility for drug addicts and alcoholics, and this is a close to home project for him. His personal story is incredible, I'll let him tell it because he tells it much better than I could. But he went from the lowest of the lows being a drug addict, almost dying, overdosing many times to now a successful entrepreneur who's dedicated to making these nutritious foods available and to changing our culture through business. It's really an incredible story. He very strongly believes that if he can do it anyone can do it. And he shares his one-day-at-a-time approach and what he thinks are his secrets to turning his life around in this really inspirational conversation. So without further ado, let's join Khalil.
Khalil, welcome. Thank you so much for being here.

Khalil: Thank you, Katie. I'm so happy, so happy to be able to connect again. This is awesome.

Katie: I'm so glad to finally get to have this conversation with you and to record it. I knew of your business before I knew of you. And I think I can say I'm an addict of the Billion Dollar Smoothie at SunLife Organics. I had it once, like, years ago in LA and then came home and craved it for a solid three months. Something in that was so incredible that my body wanted it. And I attempted to make a version at home that was not nearly as good, so now every time I'm back in LA, I'm there every single day. And I wanna talk a lot about SunLife Organics and your whole journey, but I think it would be remiss if we didn't start kind of from the beginning with your journey because you have probably one of the more inspiring stories of anyone I've ever met in my life. And the last couple of years have been a lesson for me in just how powerful and inspiring a story can be. So, of course, I'll link to your books in the show notes so you guys can read all the details. But can you take us through kind of your incredible journey to where you are now? Because I know from knowing you and having conversations, it didn't start this way for you.

Khalil: No, it didn't. And as more time goes on and as I get more and more messages from all over the world now, which is incredible because my first book is in a bunch of different languages, the more I realize the value that my story brings and in the beginning, I wanted to write a memoir because I figured there's a bunch of drug addicts out there and if they read my story, maybe it will inspire them. And the funny thing is, is most, most people that read my book are not drug addicts or alcoholics. They're just going through everyday struggles with life. And I guess the real... I guess the arc of my story and the beauty of my story is I'm nobody. I'm nobody. I'm a dude from a tiny little town in the middle of nowhere in rural Ohio that had a horrific, horrific childhood with trauma and violence and incest and neglect. And as a result, wound up a drug addict, a high school dropout, a convicted felon, and really just all of the markings and the makings of somebody that was born to lose. And in the process of all of that and the shame and the fear and the anger and just the existential angst that was underneath, drugs were my panacea. I mean, I went to drugs... Alcohol in the beginning, obviously. But drugs were much more effective and much quicker but I used drugs to anesthetize myself and to cope with my suicidal ideation. And to hear a snapshot of a story like that and then to look at my life today, if you look at my Instagram or if you read my books or if you come into one of my shops. I mean, I have people come into my shops who will literally hold up my book and go, "Do you know him? Have you met him?" And I'm like, "Yeah. Turn over the book." And they look at the back and they see me on there. The front of my book, for those of you that don't know, it's a picture of me when I was a walking corpse at 33 years old at 109 pounds with my teeth falling out of my head and open sores all over my face, shot out and addicted to heroin and crack. And today, I'm 161 pounds, so I'm, like, 50 pounds maybe... Yeah, 50 pounds heavier than I was then. And I would say...I don't know about an athlete, but, I mean, I'm... I do Tough Mudders, I do Spartan Races. I paddleboard. I learned how to surf last year. I'm a pretty athletic guy. So, my story seems to...because of its Cinderella nature, it seems to resonate really well with people and it seems to inspire a lot of people.
Katie: It definitely inspired me when I read your book. And I'm curious because I think a lot of people don't have maybe as drastic of a story in that lightning bolt moment as you did, and have to make such a drastic turnaround. But I think everybody is on a journey. And a lot of people are working toward self-improvement in some way. And I think a lot of people struggle not with knowing what they should do, but with that motivation and with actually making the change. And I know you've done this in your life, like you mentioned, in so many ways and have completely turned your life around. What do you think were some of the pivotal things that helped you make that change? Because I would guess as an addict, you had maybe wanted to before. It's not that you thought that was necessarily the best thing for your life. What actually led to that change and making it stick?

Khalil: I wish I could tell you that it was inspiration. I wish I could tell you that, like, I was smart or I read the right books or that I had some wonderful virtuous soul and, you know, light just shined on me and I blossomed into the lotus flower. But the truth is... The truth is it was pain. I was in an immense amount of pain and living in shame and living in fear and it just became too much. So, when I hear about people that are really, really struggling or their lives are really messed up. I mean, look, forget about the drug addiction and the childhood, you know, the past and all that. I mean, how about my credit score was, like, in the low 400s? How about I was a couple hundred-thousand dollars in debt because of all of the ambulance rides from all of the overdoses and all of the credit cards that I just stopped paying and all of the debt that... I mean, I was really, really, really screwed. And I had no family to help me. My mother lived below the level of poverty her whole life and my father hated me and, you know, we still don't speak. I mean, we've had periods where we speak here and there, but... I guess my point is, Katie, I didn't have anything or anyone to turn to and so when the wheels came off and everything fell apart and I found myself in so much pain, the only choice I really had was to either lay there in my own filth in a fetal position or dig down deep within myself and find the strength. And the way that I did that was by reaching out to God and just asking God for help. And I don't want anyone to think like, "Oh, he's some Christian or he's some Jew or he's some Hindu or whatever." Like, I didn't have a religion to go to. My mom was born a Jew and she was raised a Catholic. My dad was born a Muslim and he was an atheist. And I went to Catholic school. So, I had a real aversion to religion. So, it's not like I had some religion that I was practicing. I just reached out to God. I just got on my knees and I folded my hands because that's what they made us do when I was a little kid. They made us get on our knees in Jesuit Catholic school and that's how you were supposed to pray.

And so I did that and I asked God for help. And in that instant, I felt a lifting. I felt not... Look, my cravings didn't go away and my problems didn't get solved overnight by any stretch of the imagination, but I reached out to God, I found some inner strength and I kept it super simple. I just kept it super simple when I asked God every day, "God, can you please be with me now? Can you please hold my hand? Can you please walk me through this? God, I'm scared. Can you please be with me now?" Just, those were my prayers. And they were white-knuckle prayers. My prayers are much more fancy now and I've got the right beads and I've got the right statues and I go to the right places, the temples, and the churches and all that stuff. But it's just funny now how God is now and my prayers are now compared to back then. I really found the motivation and the strength through my higher power, through God. I like to say "God." Some people don't like that word. And I found my motivation and my strength from within. My motivation and my strength came from within myself in my darkest, darkest hours.
Katie: What really struck me from reading your book and then having talked to you in person, I think you have faced some of probably the darker things that people can imagine, probably darker things than many people ever hopefully have to face in their lives. And not only did you turn that around, what really struck me when I met you and in reading things that you've written, is you transitioned from that into one of the most joyful, inspiring, happy, just genuinely wonderful-to-be-around people I have ever met. And I'm guessing that probably was not an overnight change but it's really inspiring to me how you just kind of exude that. How do you maintain that on a day-to-day basis?

Khalil: It's a daily practice and it does not start out like that. I'm not... If you and I shared a roof or a bed, you would not wanna be near me the first two hours, I would say, of every morning because I still have my challenges. I still battle with depression and anxiety sometimes. I still battle from time to time with suicidal ideation. But I've developed so many tools, Katie. I've got so many tools. I've got so many things that I can do to contend with that stuff. And if I do my little sauna and cold tub and I do my little simple prayers to whatever God is and I believe that God is listening. And if I put healthy things into my body, which I do, you know, 95% of the time, meaning, you know, sometimes I am gonna get up at 11:00 at night and I'm gonna eat a pint of ice cream with macadamia nuts and then feel violently ill all day the next day. Sometimes I gotta do that. Sometimes junk food is a tool that I will use if things get... If the wheels fall off, and obviously the wheels fall off in a different way today. I mean, let's face it. I'm rich, I'm healthy, I look good. For me, I look good. So, by the wheels falling off today, it's more of, like, business challenges or maybe I wasn't being so kind and loving towards my girlfriend and she's given me a little bit of a cold shoulder. But sometimes when the wheels fall off today, I will go for a pizza and a bag of Siete chips. But mostly it's the mornings where it's really, really difficult. And I do my... My little things that I do, I talk about a lot of that in my newest book, you know, kind of, like, my process that takes place in the morning. And then all the other stuff throughout the day. Yeah. If you're putting acai and juices and veggie juices and smoothies and you're exercising, I mean, I go for a walk every single day. I'm getting sunlight on my skin every single day. I'm able to not just stave off the depression and the anxiety, but I'm able to...

I'm able to work myself into a pretty good mood. And then the other thing is, and this is the part that kind of sucks that I have to be honest about, it's a lot easier to be happy and it's a lot easier to reach my highest potential when all of my needs are met, meaning, when I've got money in the bank and I know, God forbid, I'm not gonna have any more money coming in for the next six months, I'm okay because I have a certain amount of money saved up, it allows me to take risks, it allows me to rest well, it allows me to be kinder to people. That's the part that I don't like about being super successful and having a bunch of money. I mean, it's not the part that I don't like. I love it. Don't get me wrong. I love it and I want more of it and I'm gonna create more of it. But I don't like the fact that when you're broke and when you're struggling, it's really difficult to pray and meditate, it's really difficult to be kind to other people because when I'm in survival mode and I'm scared, I'm not my best self. When I've got a bunch of dough in the bank and my bills are paid and I've got some security for the future, I'm a pretty nice guy. And that's part of it. And I just have to be transparent about that.

Katie: That makes sense. Do you think that you appreciate having those needs met more than the average person having experienced such the extreme opposite? Does that help you stay in gratitude for those things, do you think?
Khalil: I do. I don’t think... Yeah. It would be really, really difficult to appreciate the sunrise had you not been stuck in the pitch black of night and wondering what’s out there and fearful and kind of scared of that darkness, and then all of a sudden, that sunrise comes and it’s the most glorious thing you’ve ever seen. It’s because you went through eight hours of darkness. So, in a sense, yes, I think I’m much more appreciative of the creature comforts and the money in the bank and the success in business. But you gotta work at that, too. I mean, if I didn’t do a walking gratitude list, I can end up being a pretty grumpy, grouchy guy. If I’m not putting healthy food into my body and I have weird sugar crashes or I ate too much, you know, pizza the night before and I’m swollen and I don’t look good and I’m feeling insecure, it’s all intrinsically related. Health and wellness and happiness are all intrinsically related.

Katie: You mentioned your morning routine, and I loved your new book as well, "Remembering to Live." Walk us through some of the aspects of your morning routine that help you get in that mindset for your day.

Khalil: Man, I love my coffee. I really love my coffee. Before I have it, I do drink about... I think it’s... I don’t know how you measure it. One of those... I think it’s 500 milliliters of water. But I do a little pinch of sea salt, a little bit of lemon. Sometimes I don’t do either, but I always pound water right when I wake up. I get my French press going. I put in my Four Sigmatic Lion’s Mane and I throw in the Four Sigmatic Chaga. Those two for me, I just... Oh, man, I can’t get enough of them. I love a little bit of stevia and heavy cream in there. But that’s it in terms of eating in the morning. I don’t eat until about 11:00 a.m., sometimes noon, sometimes later. But that’s a big part of it is that intermittent fasting, which I know has become such a trendy, you know, buzzword right now. I don’t really think of it as fasting. I stop eating at, like, 6:00 at night and I start eating again around 11 a.m. to noon. I get that coffee in me. I jump in one of my saunas. I do either the clear light, the far-infrared, or I do the giant... Can’t think of the name right now. I wanna say Nordic. Does that sound right?

Katie: You mean like the Finnish-type barrel saunas?

Khalil: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The barrel, I jump in one of those, one or the other, do some stretching. I take a walk. If I have time, I'll jump in the ocean. If I have time, maybe I'll jump in my cold tub. I have one of those, like, Japanese soaking tubs that is always cold. It has, like, a filtration system and a cooling system on it. And then, you know, things like essential fatty acids, probiotics. I have, like, my little arsenal of nutritional supplements that I like to take. And try to get a little bit of spiritual reading in if possible. And then the cool thing now because I always hated social media... Oh, wow, the parrots are here. I have these green parrots that show up at my house and just drain all of the birdseed out of the bird feeder, but my cat loves it, so it makes me really happy. But anyway, yeah, I got my little routines in the morning that seem to put my head on straight, like I said, the walking gratitude list. Walking, in general, stretching, sauna, cold... Sometimes it's just, you know, taking a cold shower if I don't have time to do the other stuff. I sweep up my patio, I feed my little goldfish. Get... Oh, I know what I was saying. The social media stuff which I hated so much, but now with the books and with my... I’m doing a podcast, too. It’s not like any fancy podcast. I just have a little podcast called "Remembering to Live." And I got a few people listening. But I get all these messages from people saying,
"Thank you so much. You inspired me so much." So, getting those messages also feels really good, too. That's part of my routine now is kind of interacting with people on Instagram. It's pretty fun.

Katie: I love that. And one thing you address in your new book that I think is so important and I'd love to talk through is, you know, people have all these ideas and these goals of things they wanna change, they wanna get in shape, or they wanna get out of debt, or they wanna get sober, all things that you've probably done. You've improved your health, you've gotten sober, you've gotten out of debt, you've done all these things. What do you think most often holds people back from actually accomplishing that?

Khalil: They don't believe they can. They just don't believe they can. It's the greatest lie. People don't... That's what I was trying to articulate when we first started talking, is that the reason that... I found out the reason... I found out I'm not that special. Right? I mean, I read a bunch of books by people that are really special and have done really amazing things. I don't think reading books by people that have done really amazing things is all that productive because that just reinforces... I remember, like, finding more out about Tim Ferriss or finding out more about Elon Musk or any of these people, it just made me feel like more of a loser and more incapable or less capable of really doing anything good with my life. But then as I began to have these little habits that kept... I kept going with my little habits, like, saving money, not buying stuff I didn't need, going for a walk every day, eating healthy stuff. As these little habits kind of stacked up and became routines, and as I started to get some success, I started noticing people freaking out and being so inspired and what I realized is the reason people are so inspired by my story is because, like I said, I'm nobody. I got no talents. I don't even have a high school diploma. This is not feigned humility. I can't type. I can't spell. I don't have a high school diploma. I'm a convicted felon. I mean, I did just receive clemency from the, judicial clemency from the state of Texas, which is incredible. It took me 25 years. But I'm a guy that completely messed up my whole life and I don't have any, like... My friend, Kelly, is here right now. He's in the sauna. He's, like, the greatest surfer who had ever lived. He's got real skills and real talent. I've got friends with real skills and real talent. I'm not one of those dudes. I am proof that anybody can do anything. And why people don't achieve what they want to achieve because they don't believe that they can. So, if you know somebody like that, tell them to look at my Instagram or look up my podcast, "Remembering to Live," or get my book and understand that if a dude that's a convicted felon and a high school dropout and born to lose, you know, by most people's standards can have this amazing, amazing life... I mean, I employ... Katie, I employ over 400 people. Think about that. I could not hold down a job if you put a gun to my head. I was the worst. And yet, today, I employ over 400 people. It's incredible. If I can do it, anybody can do it.

Katie: I think that's what's so inspiring, one of the many things that's so inspiring about you because I think when we see those, you know, Tim Ferrisses of the world or whatever, we can look at them and say, "Yeah, but they had these... They're obviously so intelligent or they had all these advantages." And I feel like you're the first to call that out and tell people like, "No, I didn't have all these advantages. I didn't start with the best foundation or with my parents preparing me for every aspect of life or..." I mean, do you...what do you feel like... Do you feel like the mindset was the absolute key for you, that that was what helped you overcome it when you were able to make that mindset shift?
Khalil: I do. I think it was... I think what I learned in 12-step programs was one day at a time because, you know, my big fear when I first stopped shooting heroin and coke every 15 minutes around the clock was, "How in the heck am I gonna stay stopped? This is impossible. I have to get high. My life is gonna suck. I gotta have something. I need Xanax. I need methadone. I need something." And they just kept saying like, "One day at a time. One day at a time. One day at a time." And I hated it. I'm like, "Why do they keep saying that?" And then finally somebody said like, "Hey, you made it through yesterday, right?" And I'm like, "Yeah, of course. I'm in rehab." And they're like, "Right, but you made it through. Can you go one 24-hour period without sticking a needle in your arm or shooting dope?" And I already knew the answer to that was yes because I had kicked heroin and drugs many times whether it was in jail or whether it was on my own because I bottomed out yet again. I knew that I could stop for a couple of days here and there, but the point that this person was making was, we can do anything for one day, anything. You, me, whoever is listening to this, we could all, starting right now, not eat for the next 24 hours. We could... Whether we wanna believe this or not, but I'm going to prove it, we could walk for the next 24 hours. I'm not saying it wouldn't be easy and I'm not saying we wouldn't all be in bed for 10 days afterwards, but I don't know... You do have kids. You have, like, six kids, don't you?

Katie: Yep, I do have six kids. And ironically, I actually walked across the country. I walked from Los Angeles City sea one summer.

Khalil: Oh, my God. Okay. So, I'm making a good point. So, if somebody told... If you and I were together and we were hanging out at Belcampo and then somebody called and said, "Katie, your kid is up in the mountains and there's no roads and they're in danger," you and I, I would do it because I desperately need to look like a hero and I want people to like me, plus, you know, there is a part of me that also would desperately want to help anybody who was in crisis. But you and I would go and we would walk for the next 24 hours. Or let's use another example. If you told me... If you said, "Hey, can you walk for the next 24 hours straight?" I'd be like, "Hell, no." But if you said to me, "There's $1 million in cash waiting for you up in Santa Barbara. It's gonna take you 24 hours to walk there," you bet your ass I would walk there. We can do anything for one day. If you can do anything for one day, that's all you need to do. That's all you need to do. So, if you're eating stuff that you shouldn't be eating and you need to lose weight, tomorrow, for one day, you're not going to eat bad stuff, you're only gonna eat vegetables and animals or if you're not into eating animals, you're only gonna eat vegetables. But the point is no carbs, no junk food, no sugary stuff, no whatever. I know it's difficult, but you can do it for one day. Well, guess what, if you can do it for one day, you can do it forever. But don't think about forever. Think about one day at a time. And if you put one day at a time into practice, within a short period of time, you've got multiple days, multiple weeks, multiple months. And I didn't believe them when they told me that, I didn't believe them, but that was 17 years ago. I haven't had a drink or a drug in 17 years now. And when I say that out loud, I get goosebumps because I was the guy that if I ran out of coke and heroin, I would literally just shoot hot water or shoot cold water because I had to have that feeling of something going into my veins. And here I am 17 years later. It's just amazing.

Katie: That really is incredible. I love that approach of just one day at a time. I think that's maybe why even on a smaller scale, so many things like diets often fail is because you start thinking of them in terms of, "I have to do this forever." and then it doesn't feel sustainable, and then people fall off the wagon of whatever it is, and then they get in that cycle of, "Well, I'll just start tomorrow, but for the rest of today, I'm just gonna keep..."
doing this bad thing and I'll start tomorrow." And so that one-day approach gives you an attainable goal that you can build on. And that baby-step approach, it's so, so smart and it's so incredible for you. I think if someone met you now, having met you now and not known you in the past, it's almost hard to fathom your past because it's such a drastic difference who you are. Today I'd love to hear a little bit more of the story of SunLife and how that came to be because I know people also told you in the beginning that it wouldn't work or that there are gonna be problems with it. And you've definitely proven them wrong. But how did you... How did that idea come to be and how did it come to exist?

Khalil: I have a friend named Sean who's one of those guys that, like, teaches yoga and massages people for a living and he was, you know, like, the Volkswagen bus, vegan, hippie, like, one of those people. And when I was brand new, sober, I had no money, I had no job, I was still technically homeless. I was technically homeless for the first two years of my recovery and having to depend on other people to put a roof over my head and sometimes feed me. But Sean would bring me these juices and, oh, God, they were so terrible, Katie. They tasted so bad. Green juice with, like, burdock root and ginger and turmeric. And I hated it. I hated the way that it tasted. But the results were instant and immediate and I immediately began to feel better and I began to expel poisons from my body. I don't wanna get too graphic but you know what I mean. I began to expel poisons from my body. I began to feel the life force of those roots grounding me and the greens invigorating me. And I became obsessed with all this stuff that he was bringing me. I got all these greens, powders. He would bring me Vitamineral Greens or Pure Synergy Powder, like, just all this stuff. And such a good dude. And he would massage me and... I just felt like shit about myself, and so I feel like him loving me up like that and nurturing me was really the genesis of SunLife Organics. Later on, years later, when I opened up Revere Recovery, I had clients that were struggling like I used to, so I started making them juices. My juices tasted way better, by the way. I just wanna point that out. But I started making them juices and I started making them smoothies. And they responded so well to it that I was like, "Wow, man, this is cool." And so I started making juices and smoothies and acai bowls for my friends, and it just kept getting more and more popular. And eventually, I was like, "You know what? I should open up my own little juice bar." And I very naively, in 2010, when people were literally jumping off of roofs and jumping out of windows because the economy had collapsed, there was a famous story at that time of a German industrialist, actually, who jumped in front of a train because his $4 billion empire had shrunk down to $1 billion and he wrote a note to his family, saying, "I'm so sorry I embarrassed you like this," and he jumped in front of a train and killed himself. So, that was the environment that was going on in 2010 when I very naively signed a lease for my first location in a shopping center that had 6 vacancies out of 10. Everyone said, "You are out of your effing mind. This will never work. Are you crazy? You can't put your life savings into this. It's never gonna work."

But from my past and from my experiences, I understood that there was no such thing as impossible. I understood that if I was willing to work hard enough and sacrifice anything and everything and work seven days a week, then I could make it work even if I could just do $1,000 a day in business. And as of last February, pre-COVID, obviously, but as of last February, and February is a slow month, but we were doing on average $55,000 to $65,000 a day company-wide with 13 locations in three different states, and as I said before, with over 400 employees. And it's a dream, man. It's so cool. It's so fun. I love it. It's not very profitable. I haven't figured out a way to make it profitable yet, but I think with the economy of scale and now that I've been able to renegotiate a lot of these leases, you know, post-COVID, and with some of these new exciting locations popping up, I have every reason in the world to believe that it's going to be successful. And again, I'm just living proof for any of your listeners that anything you wanna do, you can do and you can achieve and you can
Katie: I've also read "The Alchemist" and I love that you brought that up. And I think that... I don't know if you've heard this part, but the beauty of that is, for years with alchemy, they wanted to turn lead into gold and they eventually figured out how to do it, not profitably but what they discovered was they always thought they had to add something to change it. And it turns out they had to take away part. And it's such a metaphor for life. So often it's the simplification and the letting go and the removing the things rather than then trying to, like, just constantly add and build and change that sometimes the biggest metamorphosis is in the letting go. I thought that was a relevant point to some of your stories as well.

Khalil: Wow. I did not know that. That is incredible. And when you said it, I immediately thought of this old-timer guy, this... As my dad used to say angrily, "Goddamn doper." But this old junkie that I used to score from who never got out of bed and he lived in his mom's house who was, like, in her 80s and he was, like, in his 50s. And when I was 30, 50 seemed old to me, obviously. I don't think that anymore because I feel younger and better than ever. But this guy, Jeff, that I used to score from in reference to what you're saying in terms of taking something away to make it into gold. So, I used to go over there and score from him all the time. I don't know how... He always had heroin, always. And he never left. But that's the great mystery. And I never got to find out why and I don't wanna find out why. But I would go over there all the time and score from him all the time. I don't know how... He always had heroin, always. And he never left. But that's the great mystery. And I never got to find out why and I don't wanna find out why. But I would go over there all the time and I would get my heroin and I would fix and get well. We called it "getting well," sort of ironic. And I would leave. But one time I was hanging out there and it was so sad because his mom wanted to make us sandwiches. So, what was I gonna do? Leave? So, I stuck around and as I stuck around, I was walking around his room and I saw all these pictures. And there was this really handsome guy and he was next to this really awesome car and there was pictures of him with this really beautiful girl. And I'm looking and I was like, "Oh, is that your little brother?" And he goes, "No, that was me." And I'm like, "What?" He goes, "Yeah. I got sober, like, 10 years ago and my whole life turned around and I got a job, I was a broker, and I did this, and I made a bunch of money, and I met this girl, and blah, blah, blah." And I'm like, "Well, what happened?" He's like, "What do you think happened?" And I'm just like, "Oh, God." And I'm looking at him and I'm like, "Okay. But why don't you get sober again?" And he goes, "Hell, no." And I said, "Why not?" And he looked at me with these evil piercing eyes and he said, "Because this is my lot in life." And he just turned away and he began shooting up. And, oh, my God, I just... Even though I was totally strung out and in a bad place, I knew that that was the fate that would await me if I didn't get my shit together. I got clean about a year after that. But what you're saying is had he just taken out
the daily use of drugs and alcohol, his life could have gone back to what was clearly the most incredible life ever. And the reason I knew that it was the most incredible life ever is because he kept those pictures up, I think, to remind him, but I don't know, man. It's sad and it's beautiful at the same time because, you're right. Sometimes we just have to eliminate something in order to get to the life that I believe God intended all of us to live, a life that's meaningful and happy.

Katie: Exactly. And also to let go of those things that we never had control over in the first place. I think that's been my journey over the last couple of years is, I think often we get so caught up in, you know, other people's opinion of us or outside things that are out of our control. And when we really boil it down, the things that we all have our own power over are truly not even what happens to us, but just how we respond. And I think when we let go of all the things that are not in our power to change and to focus on, like you said, conserving the energy, but focus on the things that we can change, which is our own response, our own reactions and our own little baby steps every day, we end up with this incredible power because we let go of all the things that's caused so much stress that we can't really affect anyway.

Khalil: Wow. It's so true. And you know what? So many people say to me, like, "Well, how could you not talk to your dad? That's your dad." And blah, blah, blah. If you read my book, you know a little bit of why I don't talk to my dad. But I mean, there's a multitude of reasons. But here's the deal. What you're saying is so true because my dad... Forget about loving me. My dad doesn't even like me. I make my dad's skin crawl. I don't know what it is. I think maybe I remind him of my mom or... I don't know. To be honest with you, I really don't know and I'm never gonna find out because I don't talk to my dad. And it's been about... Well, I cleaned up and I made some dough and I brought him into my life and I tried to buy his love and his affection and it worked for a moment and then it turned the opposite, then it was like I couldn't possibly give him enough. I bought him a car. I got him a wardrobe. I took him out of the country. I took him to Cabo. Just, nothing worked. He just wanted more and he still complained, and more and he still complained. And he always just... I always allowed him to make me feel like shit and make me feel less than.

And one of the moments that hurt the most was when I got SunLife Organics opened finally, and we opened the doors, it took, like, 11 and a half months to get it open. And Katie, there was a line out the door, literally, out the door. And we walk in and he's looking and he's looking and I'm feeling so good. I'm like, "Finally. Finally. Finally." I'm, like, 41 years old, I'm finally gonna get my dad's approval. And I swear to God on my life, Katie, we walk in, I go behind the counter, in walks Pierce Brosnan. You couldn't have scripted this better. My dad was obsessed with James Bond and in walks Pierce Brosnan, which for me wasn't that big of a deal because you can't swing a dead cat in this town. I live in Malibu. You can't swing a dead cat in this town without hitting a famous person. But Pierce came in all the time. It just so happens that on this day, he was shooting something, so he had the suit on and the hair slicked back and he's just so devastatingly handsome to begin with, but you throw the suit on and it's even more so. And Pierce walks in and he's like, "Good morning, Khalil. How are you today?" And I'm like, "I'm awesome, man. How are you doing?" He's like, "Good. Good." And I'm like, "What are you doing?" He's like, "I'm looking." And I'm like, "Will you do me a big favor?" He's like, "Anything." And I said, "Will you please go down...? You see that guy sitting at the back table? Can you go say hello to him?" He's like, "Of course." I said, "That's my dad." And Pierce being Pierce and just being an amazing guy and English and just, he went back there and he laid it on so thick. I mean, he went back there and was talking about me like I was the greatest guy on the planet, which...I love him forever for doing that.
And I'm thinking to myself, "Finally. Finally. I got it. I'm gonna get my dad's approval. I'm gonna get my dad's love. I'm gonna get..."

So, he goes back, my dad practically faints. He asks for a picture with him. They take the picture. Pierce leaves. I go to walk outside. I'm drinking my smoothie. My dad comes out. We're standing by Bank of America and we're looking at SunLife and we're looking at the line out the door and I'm just waiting for it, Katie. I'm waiting. I'm waiting. I know it's coming. I know it's coming. And then he says, "Goddamn it. I should have moved out here 50 years ago." And that was it. All I wanted was, "Wow, son. I'm so proud of you. Wow, son. Look at what you created. I'm so proud of you." And he couldn't say it. He couldn't say it. All he could do was think about himself and think about what he would do if he had a line out the door at his business. And Katie, it broke my heart in a million pieces. And there was a few more situations like that which I'm not going to bore your listeners with, but there was a few more situations like that where at a certain point, I just had to say, "I have no control over this man and his opinion of me. Regardless of whether he's my father or not, I have no control over his opinion of me and over his actions. Therefore, I choose to set up appropriate boundaries and cut him out of my life for good." And I did. And it makes me sad because I love my dad and I want my dad to be happy, but my dad doesn't love me, my dad doesn't like me. I'm not playing the violin. I'm not sad. My life's incredible. I'm happier than most people alive on this planet today. But getting the love and approval of my father is something that is out of my control and rest assured, now that he's 85 years old, it's most likely never gonna happen. And Katie, I'm okay with that. I'm okay with that because I don't have control over it. And I appreciate you bringing that up because it helped me to make sense of why I don't talk with him and now I feel like I have a proper explanation to people because I can't control him. I can control me, sort of, to the best of my ability, but I can't control my dad and his opinion of me.

Katie: Wow. It's so striking, I think of that often as a parent as well of, like, how deep that need is for that relationship with our parents and how painful that can be when it doesn't happen. And just, like, you don't have any control over your dad, I often remind myself, I don't have control over my children either. They're their own independent human beings. And I tell them so often that, "My love for you is unconditional and you can do literally nothing in this whole world that will ever make it go down. You also cannot do anything to increase it because it's already unconditional, like it does not depend on your achievement, it does not depend on your failures. Nothing you can do will change the way that I love you." But I'm curious, having been through this amazing life journey, from the son's perspective or thinking as a parent if you're able to do that, like, what advice would you give to us as parents of how to support our children in those things that they need from parents and also how to, set them up for success or keep them from failure or just any advice you would have for parents.

Khalil: Man, that's a tough one because, you know, as much of a grouchy old prick that my dad is and the beatings that I took and just the harsh environment that I grew up in, had I not gone through that... And by the way, my dad did the best that he could. I mean, I heard stories about my grandpa. I never got to meet him, but I heard stories about the monster of the man that he was. And my dad did the best that he could, so I don't hate my dad at all. I love my dad dearly. But if my dad wasn't such a prick and if my dad didn't hand out those beatings and if I didn't suffer so much as a kid, there's no way I could be as successful as I am today. Like, I'm unstoppable. I don't... There's... I will run through walls. There is nothing that can stop me. My CFO who is the most incredible woman ever, her name is Jamie and she's an awesome mom. She loves her kids so much. It
brings a lump in my throat when I think about it. But Jamie said to me, like, "How do you do it? How do you yell at these billionaires? How do you threaten them like that? How do you negotiate like that? I don't understand. Where do you get the guts from and the confidence from?" And it's like, because of the shit that I've been through. There's nothing... There's nobody out there that's gonna give me a worse beating than my dad did. There's no shit that I'm gonna endure that was worse than the childhood that I went through and the sexual abuse and the trauma and the neglect and crying out for help.

And I had a mom who, I was grabbing her arms saying, "Please make him stop," and she's, like, pushing me away and saying, "He's just tickling you." And I got a dad that was like, "You're a Goddamn liar." Nothing is worse than that, Katie. Nothing. So, my advice, I mean, God, if I could be so presumptuous, I would have to say, you gotta be tough. You gotta be tough with these kids. My girlfriend is... I mean, she's 10 times stronger than I am. My girlfriend gets up in the morning, goes for a run for an hour, goes to work for 11 hours, comes home, starts doing the dishes. I'm like, "What are you doing?" She's like, "What?" I'm like, "Don't do that. I can do that." And she's like, "No." And then she started cooking dinner. And I'm just like, "How do you do this?" And she's like, "What do you mean? This is what I do." And after, like, watching her behaviors over the years and talking with her about it, I found out or I realized that she had a dad that was really tough, I mean, kind of a jerk, screamed a lot, was really tough on her. She had to raise her two kid brothers because the mom and dad were off working all the time. And then her real biological father is a nightmare. So, to her, I'm a joy to be around based on her experience. And her going to work and coming home and doing the dishes or going for a run in the morning, which I couldn't do all three of those things in one day if you put a gun to my head, but to her, it's just second nature.

So, I think if you can be really, really, like, you gotta be tough on these kids, you gotta prepare them for life because life ain't fair, but at the same time, just like you said, you also have to let them know you love them and just, you can't say it enough. You can't say it enough when Mother Teresa said, "For all of you out there that wanna change the world, why don't you go home and hug your kids?" When I read that, it gave me the chills because it's so true. We gotta love our kids. Our kids are gonna save this planet, and more importantly, our daughters are gonna save this planet. It's the women of the world. It's the young women that work for me right now, and it's their daughters. Women are gonna reclaim their power and women are gonna take things over because us men have messed everything up and we have made such a mess of the planet and such a mess of government and such a mess of the way society functions. Women are going to come into power, and they're gonna take over, and they're gonna fix this world, and they're gonna usher us into a new era of light and love and prosperity. The boys are gonna be there to support them. And we need to love the boys, too, but we gotta make the boys tough. But beyond making the boys tough, we gotta make the boys understand 1,000% that women are sacred. Women are sacred. Women are gods. Women create life in their belly, which is something that a man in a billion years won't be able to do. And when you can create life, you are like a god. And we need to go back to that and remember how sacred women are and start treating them accordingly. And so, I don't know. My advice, if you got boys, if you got sons, you better teach them with a strong, firm hand to be tough and to be respectful and to know that women are sacred. And if you've got daughters, you need to let them know how powerful they are and to not let anyone or anything ever intimidate them. That's my advice.
Katie: I love that Mother Teresa quote. And another one of my favorites from her is that, "You can do no great things, only small things with great love," which goes back to that one-day-at-a-time, baby-step approach I think that you mentioned earlier.

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I'd also love, as we get close to the end of our time, to hear any advice you have for entrepreneurs because you are a Cinderella story and you have built incredible things from odds that people would have thought were impossible. And so many people... I know so many entrepreneurs on small local scales to big national companies. Do you have any advice that you would give to entrepreneurs?

Khalil: Yeah. I would say remember the one-day-at-a-time thing because it really truly, ultimately, you're gonna be the sum total of your daily habits and routines. Sometimes I wish it wasn't like that. Sometimes I wish I could just kick back and eat Doritos and drink Mexican Coca-Colas in glass bottles and eat Reuben sandwiches every day. And that's kind of like my Achilles heel, my... I'm a salty, savory, spicy guy. I would love to just be able to, like, eat wings and pizza and sandwiches every day. But then I would look that way. The reason I look like an athlete with barely exercising at all is because I live in a juice bar. It's not like I'm a strong virtuous guy that has a bunch of discipline. I don't really have any food in my house because I'm at a juice bar seven days a week, so I'm always having smoothies and juices and acai bowls. And to the entrepreneurs out
there, like, you're gonna become your environment whether you like it or not. So, you know, I hang out with people that are way smarter than me, stronger than me, more successful than me, and more talented than me. That way, I'm always pushing myself to be better. I'm always the dumbest guy in the room. I'm never afraid to admit that. I love being transparent, telling people the truth. I think it's one of the most underrated powers out there is being truthful and transparent. I think humility is one of the most underrated superpowers out there, and the humility comes from the daily Walk in Gratitude list, which I do out loud if I can. Sometimes people see me doing it, and they think I'm a crazy person and that's okay. Sometimes I do it silently.

Having faith in God and constantly building that relationship up. It's just so important to have a God of your own understanding that you know loves you and takes care of you. And the secret to being a great entrepreneur, I think, they teach in business class, they call it penetrating the area... Penetrating the barrier of entry. That's what was told to me by a guy that was getting his master's degree in business from USC that, "What made me successful was my ability to penetrate the area of the barrier of entry." I just call it running through walls. You wanna be an entrepreneur? Get ready to run through walls. It doesn't feel good. It really doesn't feel good. I'm sore. My neck hurts. My back hurts. I need a massage. I push myself too hard. I don't go to parties. I don't go to clubs. I don't go out. I'm in bed at 9:00 every night. I'm up at 5:00, 5:30 a.m. every single morning. I try to get as many podcasts and Audible books in that I can. I'm always just constantly trying to improve myself 1% every day, which doesn't seem like much, but at the end of the year, it's 365%, which if you as an individual could improve yourself by 365%, could you imagine how amazing that would look and feel? And it really comes down to those tiny little daily habits, one day at a time like we said earlier.

And I wish I had some fancy... Well, I don't wish I had some fancy course I could sell to you. I don't want to have people pay to come to my seminar. I mean, I love Tony Robbins and I think he's the end-all-be-all and I think there's a lot of people that try to imitate him or be like him or capitalize on people's pain and suffering that's out there because so many of us are in pain and suffering. But I don't wanna sell you anything. I don't need anything from you. I just want you to know that you can do anything and you can be anything you want. But remember something, especially if you're young, do you know how many times people walked in every day? I live in Malibu. We live at the beach here. There's beautiful waves. The beach...the one that I live on is, like, the best surfing beach there is. And how many days, how many hundreds, if not thousands of times did people come in and go, "Dude, did you get any of that swell?" And the answer was no. And every year when the cool parties were going on for Halloween or the cool parties were going on for New Year's Eve or the cool parties were going on for whatever, whatever it was, I was in bed at 9:00 that night and I was up the next morning at 5:00 in the morning and I was working on myself. And I've done that for 17 years in a row now. So, I'm 365% better times 17. And I'm not good at math, but I think that's a lot better than I used to be, like, thousands of times better than I used to be. And again, if a dummy like me can do it, anybody can do it. That's my advice.

Katie: I love that. The 1% is such a great metric and makes huge changes, like you said, over time. As we start to wrap up, is there... I always love to ask if there's a book or a number of books besides your own, which I will, of course, link to, that have had a dramatic impact on your life, and if so, what they are and why.
Khalil: Yeah. There's been a lot of books. There's been a lot of books. And whether it's, like, the standard classic, "Think and Grow Rich," or "The Science of Getting Rich" by, I think it's Wallace D. Wattles. That's the one that they borrowed all the ideas for "The Secret" from. "Think and Grow Rich" or "The Science of Getting Rich." Don't get them both because you're just gonna get confused. Get one or the other and read it 100 times and take notes and do exactly what it says. Financially, I think that's the Bible of self-help. Tony Robbins' stuff. I love it. I think his getting the edge or "Get the Edge." I'm not sure which it is. That program, which is only, like, 100 bucks now. I got it on cassette tape. I got all his stuff on cassette tape a million years ago, and then eventually I got it on CDs and DVDs and all that stuff. And then now I actually just repurchased all of his stuff again. I love the Tony Robbins stuff. Huge impact on my life. But then going back to the books, I mean, sometimes you got to escape and sometimes you got to read stuff that is just gonna take you to another place. You and I talked about "The Alchemist." I think that should be required reading for anybody. I think "The Power of Now" along with "The Power of Kabbalah." Both of those books separately. I absolutely am obsessed with Byron Katie and I have a feeling you are as well. But Byron Katie, "Loving What Is" drastically changed my life. I love Marianne Williamson. I love "Siddhartha." I've probably read "Siddhartha" 25 times. "On the Road" by Jack Kerouac. Absolutely love that book. I mean, I could go on and on and on. Reading... Because I didn't have an education, I had to educate myself. So, reading is like a huge, huge part of it. Right now I'm reading that "Learning to Love Yourself As If Your Life Matters." I think that's the right name of the title by Ravit Navakal or...I know I'm murdering his last name, but... I'm always getting stuff and listening to it, but I can afford it. If you're an entrepreneur and the budget is tight, stick with, like, "Think and Grow Rich" or "The Science of Getting Rich." And do that first and when money starts coming in, then get all the other stuff. Get "The Four Agreements," you know, get all that stuff.

Katie: Awesome. Khalil, it has been a pleasure to chat with you. I could talk to you all day. I love the book recommendations and appreciate your time and so glad to hear that you are doing well even amidst the craziness right now.

Khalil: Yeah. I hope I get to see you soon, Katie. I really wanna... I wanna treat you to some of our amazing matcha that we just came out with. In fact, can you have somebody send me your address so I can treat you to some of that? I went to Japan and I found this incredible matcha and I love it. And we've been making these iced matcha lattes with it and people are just obsessed with it. I wanna send you some and I wanna hang out. I wanna go back to Belcampo and I want Anya to be there this time. I don't know if you ever got to meet Anya.

Katie: I have not met her yet, but I have interviewed her. Some of the listeners may remember her podcast interview. So, a big fan of her as well.

Khalil: She's a goddess. She is a goddess and she's an amazing woman. And I love her so much. But yeah, I wanna hang with you at Belcampo and I wanna go to a couple different SunLife Organics with you and treat you to all kinds of new amazing recipes that we have going and just get a hug from you. You're such a sweet, wonderful, beautiful woman. And I love what you're doing for this world. And, yeah, thank you for having me on here. This is awesome.
Katie: I look forward to that next time I'm in LA. Thank you for your time. And thanks, as always, to all of you listening for sharing your most valuable resource, your time, with both of us today. We're so grateful that you did, and I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of "The Wellness Mama Podcast."

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