



Episode 376: How to Use Everyday Activities to
Rewire the Brain for Calmer Kids
With Brain Harmony

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is sponsored by Joovv Red Light Therapy. Like many of you, I am always trying to find different ways to keep my wellness routine in check. I've noticed some of the things that are most helpful to me are practicing daily gratitude, a no-phone rule one hour before and after bed, eating healthy and exercising, and if you've been listening to me for a while now, getting in my red light therapy sessions. I've told you before about why I personally love Joovv before: the skin and hair benefits are awesome and I find that I recover faster from soreness after working out. Joovv is my preferred red light therapy device because it has a patented, modular system that lets you build as you go so you can find a way to fit it into your budget. They have full-body devices (Joovv Elite & Duo) and you can keep connecting these pieces together to make it as big of a device as you like. They also have a smaller desktop model (Joovv Mini), which is great for travel or for spot treating. Remember, when it comes to natural light modalities, bigger is better for optimal benefits, which is why their modular system is so unique. I wanted my listeners to know they offer exclusive discounts on larger devices when you upgrade your system within the first year of your initial purchase. Their unique modular design lets you build a larger, full-body system over time, and their bundle pricing ensures you'll pay only what you would have paid if you bought the larger system from the start. Find out more at joovv.com/wellnessmama and use the code `wellnessmama` for a free gift.

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, welcome to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com. That's wellness with an E on the end, my new line of personal care products, like hair care and toothpaste.

And this episode is a special one about how to rewire the brain for calmer kids and a calmer mom, especially with everything we all have going on right now. I'm bringing back a repeat guest, much-requested, Carol Garner-Houston, who is a licensed occupational therapist, who specializes in helping children and adults to cope with neurodevelopmental challenges. And she's been doing this for decades. I've used some of her programs for my own things that I was working through, and with my kids. And she has been spending a lot of

time converting a lot of these programs that she does with kids to things that parents can do with their kids at home and programs that can help. I know a lot of you have reached out about programs you would normally have your kids do through a school system or through a special program that have either been changed or are shut down right now. And I wanted to bring her on to talk about how her simple plan is helping brain health and neurological function for families struggling with a wide variety of options. She has some of the best outcomes in the world. And she now has the ability for you to do these things in your own home. And she has virtual specialists who can walk you through it. So I thought it was really important to bring her back and to really address all of the coping mechanisms that we can use as parents, especially if anyone who has children with sensory things that they're working on or just who are feeling more overwhelmed and stressed in the home with everything we're all navigating right now. So, let's jump in and start learning. Carol, welcome back.

Carol: Thanks for having me, Katie. I just couldn't be more thrilled to be with you and at a better time to relieve some more suffering for our friends.

Katie: Absolutely. It's always such a pleasure to speak with you. And with everything that's gone on this year, I knew we just had to have you back on to talk about some really specific things that can help a lot of our listeners and their families navigate all of this because certainly many families are navigating new things they haven't maybe had to do before. Especially, I've heard from quite a few listeners and readers who have kids with various types of sensory things that they're working through. And a lot of times, there's programs through the school system that are part of the thing that's helping them, and many of those things have changed, or become virtual, or gone away right now. And I know many moms who are navigating being a teacher for the first time, for instance, and trying to help their children through these things. So, to start broad, I'd love to talk about some of the best coping strategies for our sensory friends and parents in 2020.

Carol: Absolutely. And we are getting phone calls from across the country, and parents are reporting the trends in themselves and in their children with really some disturbing, like sensory deprivation types of experiences, like excessive periods of crying for kids, regression in learning and development, more tantrums, poor focus. They can't reach restorative sleep consistently. They are talking about sensory defensive type behaviors, sensitivities to sound and touch, or just being stuck in those OCD or negative loops, that rigid thought process, being socially awkward. And we talked about that. Even our greetings these days are a little extra socially awkward. Do I hug? Do I elbow? Is this person, you know, wearing a mask or are they really concerned? But also just that over-reactive hyper-alert startle response that seems to be on for everyone. So, absolutely, we understand why this is with the worldwide pandemic. Those movement and lifestyle restrictions, it's all wreaking havoc on our nervous system and our families are finding such a response with using our steps of the Calm Method, really to help them cope with all of this chaos that's happening outside of their bodies, but then, of course, that impact that it's happening to their own bodies and the impact it's having on their friends and their family. So, the first step with that absolutely is always to establish safety and calm within your own nervous system and then within the trajectory of your family for the day.

So we help our friends really reorganize how they approach their day, how they approach how they're feeling, and what to do to change that, just by looking at these behaviors as a reflection of the state of the brain, and

then choosing different things to change that state. So we've really been giving families some great plans on how to do that. So, essentially, we have our Calm Method, and it has four steps to it. It's got the first step, which is to comfort and organize the nervous system. The second step is to activate specific parts of the brain that may be weak or under-activated at this time. And then we teach the brain to learn by removing barriers that are preventing us from doing that and then helping the brain to learn optimally just by participating in certain activities. So we teach our moms and dads how to do this in the home. And that is what is really bringing down a lot of their stress and allowing them not only to cope but then as we walk them through our process, they begin to master these neurological skills of really being able to have a more resilient neurological system that can bend, and shift, and roll with the punches as they come because absolutely these days, there's just changes coming for us every day. But something like these very practical ways to speak to your nervous system, change that trajectory in your home, has been the most useful for these parents.

Katie: That's so great. And yeah, I think you're right, there's so many parents navigating having their kids home all the time, which is new for a lot of families. And there is more overwhelm for both the parents and the kids as we learn to navigate different dynamics like that. I feel like I've learned firsthand in the last couple of years for myself, just how important that feeling of feeling safe is internally and what a difference that makes physically. Because I've talked about it on this podcast before, but I did all of the physical things possible for so long, and it wasn't until I dealt with that, the neurological and the inner emotional side, that I realized that I felt safe and calm in my body, and the physical stuff followed. And so, so often it's easy to try to focus. And I still think these things are so important, you know, the diet, and sometimes supplements, and lifestyle, all of those things are still very important. But if you're not addressing the inner part, then those things aren't ever gonna be as effective as they could be. And I know you talk about this a lot. So walk us through why it's so important to feel safe when we're talking about health and healing through these things.

Carol: Well, what I really liked what you said is that, you know, you are managing this for yourself, and you have done all of the cellular things that you can do with your diet and supplements. And that also too, I've heard you talk about, you know, some cognitive therapy where you're trying to talk through this process, and trying to integrate it, and move past different types of trauma at different levels. But when we're talking about resetting the nervous system, the neurological framework that makes up and supports all of those experiences that you've been trying to make changes for, experiencing trauma or getting ourselves back together and more organized, you really need to give that pulse of safety to the nervous system. And with some of the tools and technologies, and protocols we have now, you really can go straight in and give that pulse of safety to an anatomical structure in the human body, specifically, the vagus nerve. And when you do that, you can access and stimulate that parasympathetic nervous system, rest, and digestion. It's a state that we're all built to have and to be able to access it. But right now, those things are just getting further and further away from us. So sometimes our friends, when they come to see us, yes, we use the Calm Method. We start with that very first comfort and soothing to the nervous system. Some of our friends really could benefit from the technology that is an accelerant in that step. For example, we have things like an Alpha-Stim unit that can produce the alpha waves in the brain, which can combat anxiety, insomnia, depression.

It speaks to that vagus nerve very simply, allows for you to change that trajectory real quickly so that you can access your more, you know, social side, your creative side. You can follow through and execute with the things you're trying to get accomplished in your day. But first, we absolutely have to feel safe and calm. It is a

major piece to organizing the body for optimal health, as well because with that overactive sympathetic response of the nervous system, that's that fight, flight, or freeze response that we know so well due to this chronic stress, all of that being in that state perpetually every day. And for many of us, for all of us, it's in a chronic state. And so the neural energy is drained with an inability to restore. And the person can get stuck in this space, which can make you sicker and less resilient, making it harder to complete basic tasks, such as self-care or much less learning, right, with our new homeschool platforms and the new work requirements that we're needing to do. So, it's just so important to really set that first thing up for ourselves. We can use tools to do that, but we can also use things... What can we use that we don't need to actually purchase? What can we do to change this trajectory in our home, like, right now? So, absolutely feeling safe, knowing what to expect, and knowing that you have what you need is a basic need. And with some of our little friends, especially we love to set up visual schedules in the home, that way they know exactly what's expected of them. We take little pictures of the different tasks that we want them to do, especially if it's a task that's very difficult for them. Like, maybe it's waking up and getting the morning routine together before school, maybe that takes a lot of stress, maybe there's a lot of friction there, maybe there's a lot of discussion.

And this goes on and on, taking just more frustration. So, for this, we would have little pictures of each one of the steps we want our little friends to do. And so they know when they wake up, they're gonna get dressed, they're gonna eat breakfast, they're gonna brush their teeth, they're gonna make their bed. And you can keep referring to that visual schedule, let's them know what's coming next. And you can employ the when then. When you finish your routine, then you can have some free time outside before we get to work on your online homeschooling, as an example. So, putting these steps into chunks, and blocking them, and making it very easy and fun actually to complete these steps, and it helps that transition into school or into that next thing that you're trying to do much easier because you have this nice predictable schedule. So, changing what they see visually as well, we're super, very careful to watch what we're putting on our screens, right? That can very much so send information to our autonomic nervous system that we are not safe, especially if you're leaving things on like the television on in the background for hours and hours. That's definitely sending input to our human neurological system, that you are not safe, which can produce increased cortisol levels, stress hormones. And then if we don't have a lot of movement opportunities, if we don't prioritize really sweating out and detoxing the cortisol levels, doing some strenuous physical exercise, all of that pushing and pushing on the joints is like a central nervous system sedative. It's what the body is needing and seeking.

And if that has been restricted for any reason, you really need to prioritize that because it really can help your neurological system feel and be neurologically sound while you also add in these other ways to comfort the system through our senses. So another way we do that is with some essential oils, and we pull in the calming and soothing ones when we need them, all to feed our body and our sensory systems, the input to curate, that it is calm and safe. And it is so important. One of the pieces, so important this piece is, is we learned that in servicing all of these families in different ages and different diagnoses, looking for all of these different functional outcomes. Well, what we found was is that you have to build in first to calm and soothe their nervous system before we're able to access any of the higher cognitive centers for learning, or speech, or attention, any of those higher cognitive centers of the brain, executive function, motivation, creativity. But we can't get there unless we first can feel and be neurologically safe. So it makes me think of my speech and language friends. Absolutely, when we use bagel regulating tools first, then ask that individual to speak, you can get so much more access to the speech and language parts of the brain if the human body feels and is neurologically safe. So that is a very important tip to understand when you're looking for different skills within

yourself or others, and you're trying to build it, and you can't have access to it, that very first step of safety and calm is very much so the priority that can help you get to those other states you're trying to be in.

So, it's just been absolutely a gift to offer families, first of all, this perspective, right? Just teaching them this, that, "Hey, we can actually change how our nervous system is responding, by chewing it in all these different ways, feed it what it needs." And what's so nice is, I've made this great PDF link for you, Katie, and that we can give our access to our friends so that you can print out these steps that I'm reviewing here. It's the same steps that I give to our clients when they call and you can reference these things, different parts of your day to help change that trajectory because this very first step is just so important. And it really is the reason why our protocols and our tools are so successful. It's the way we organize it, but it's in the order in which we do it with safety being first.

Katie: I love it. And I'm so glad you brought up the when, then, and the schedule because I know we talked about this briefly in one of our previous podcasts, and also another guest who does positive parenting mentioned a similar thing. And I think this is such an important tip for parents just realizing, and something I did a lot of years ago as well, was realizing a lot of my stress was coming from being asked the same questions over and over. And I realized, that was actually on me that I hadn't given my kids the tools to know when things were going to happen. So, of course, they had to ask me because I was the one who controlled the snacks, and the meals, and all the things they needed. And by creating that chart and a schedule, they knew when things were gonna happen. They knew when they could get food, and what it was, and they knew how to prepare it. It reduced my question load by so much that it reduced my stress level, and they felt so much more autonomous and in control of their own day, which made them feel much less stressed as well. So I love that you brought that up. I'll make sure that link to the PDF you mentioned is in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm so you guys can download that. And I think another important thing to touch on here, we talked about this in our previous episodes, and I'll make sure those are linked as well, if you guys have not heard them, they're worth the listen for sure, but we talked about the vestibular system. And I actually need to have you come to my house one day to see that I've added so many things for the vestibular system from a gymnastics track down our hallway to yoga swings hanging from the ceiling in every room. But for anyone who's not familiar with what the vestibular system is, and just why it's so important, can you kind of give us a primer on that and talk us through how that can make us better parents as well?

Carol: Absolutely, Katie. So the vestibular system is one of the first senses to develop in utero when we're growing humans. And it is essentially on the very basic form, our ability to know where we are in space, that intrinsic ability. Layman's terms essentially, you can use the word as your sense of balance, but it is your sense of balance connected with your inner ear. And knowing where you are in space is very much so an organizing basic function of the sensory system that needs to be intact in order for us to access all of the other systems of the human brain and nervous system, which you would think, "Gosh, that sounds really important and it is, but not a lot of people know about it, know what it is or how to access it and bring gains from it." So, when we talk about how can vestibular activation help me be a better mom? We are finding the trends with our moms is that their vestibular system, their sense of balance is considered very weak or sensitive. Now we have different philosophies on why this is. Many moms going through the birthing process, just really need that brain-body connection after those pieces and bringing in just a tighten of that whole process, and the vestibular system being part of that. And because we are breastfeeding and we're recovering a little bit there

in the beginning, we may be a little more sedentary. And then if we're not getting up and doing the right amount of movement, and giving our system the right amount of input, then actually that system gets weaker, and then we want to be more sedentary even more. And then when we do try to move or do more dynamic movement, it may be a little noxious very subtly. And then we avoid doing things like going outside less than we would usually do because our vestibular system has gotten weakened.

But as it is, every time I chat with you, Katie, it's just such a delight to have you talk to me about these beautiful dynamic tools you have in your home or you were chatting with me about the pole vaulting that you and your family are participating in as part of your hobby. I love that. I love that I can see your blonde hair and your smile as you're flying through the air. I love it not only because of the fun of that activity and what you're doing with your family, but I know that flinging yourself up and over in the diving, and the ruling, all of that is making you even a better Katie and a better mom because that movement is filling a basic need of the central nervous system that's required for all of the function that we're used to just being able to do. These days a weakened vestibular system is a trend, not only with our moms but now also with our friends. Right? There's such limitations on our movement. We talked about this even before 2020, just how the trajectory in our communities was, you know, more screentime and less participation outside, and how that negatively impacts development. Well you take that and now layer in this new layer where there's mandates restricting your movement and where you can go? That's adding just even more to our nervous system and lessening our ability to just keep our body in a regular, consistent routine and pattern that keeps us light and lovely. So even in that visual schedule that you get so excited about, that I get so excited about, you can actually then... Once you embrace of the visual schedule, then you can put blocks of time in there that could really help you strengthen different areas that you need to not only do you put things like your grooming in there, but you can also put things like heavy work activity or vestibular balance work, and layer that in so that it will help your family, you as a mom, your child as a new learner on an online platform or just go into brick and mortar, it's extra stressful.

You can layer in certain activities that can elevate them so they can be at that just-right level, so that they can learn, or they can relax, or they can play lightly with their siblings in the house, or they can section out, "Hey, it's time for me to go do my strenuous exercise," so that they can prioritize it, and feel what makes them better, so that they can choose these things themselves. And again, that's how you and your children are building this new routine for yourself. You build it with visual schedules. You comfort the system, the home. And then you can train the brain to do more of those things that may be weak for you or that you're trying to build. So, vestibular, so important, it is at the base of the pyramid of learning, which we reference that all the time. I'll make sure that you have that link as well. The pyramid of learning really puts the words that I'm using now into a nice visual image to help you understand that that vestibular system is at the base of a central nervous system. All other skills are dependent upon it. And these days with the limitations, it's only getting weaker, but we have wonderful plans and activities. We teach you how to look at an individual's state of being, look at their behaviors, and then choose something that can counteract that or stimulate something to elevate them to a better state of being. It's just such a wonderful process that we can provide now. And again, ever since you told me about your family flying through the air with the pole vaulting, it is just such a beautiful, visual imagery for me. I just love it. And I love all of your tools working on that vestibular. And it does, it keeps you elevated. It keeps you moving, and moving along, and working on that next goal or that next piece. All of that's so important, especially these days.

Katie: I love it. And I love that you talk about it for the moms as well, because I've talked about this before, but I think as moms, our mental state sets the tone for our families so much. And so when we're able to find more calm, our kids can benefit from that. And it's a ripple effect, even just a very subconscious change in our family. And I think this vestibular piece is so often missed when it comes to moms. And I noticed it in myself. After having kids, I used to do flips and stuff, no problem. And then after having babies, I didn't feel comfortable or safe going upside down at all, in any form. I had to retrain that. And it's been so fun to learn with pole vaulting or with gymnastics with my kids, learn to play again, and like you said, to feel safe in my body, safe enough to go upside down, and all of those things. And I also know as a mom, and I'm sure you've probably seen this with your own kids and also with the kids you work with, it's so important to lead that part, by example. Like, I could tell my kids to do something or I could tell them it's important to exercise or to move or to play upside down. And that's great. But when they see me do it, they all just join along, or when I do another podcast guest, Hunter Fitness, his class, which is all about mobility and joint protection, which is really important when you're pole vaulting, it's something I knew my kids should do. And I would encourage them to do it. But if I sit down and do it, they just come sit down and do it with me. And so, as moms, it's like when we can prioritize that, not only do we feel calmer and feel better, but our kids are so much more likely to want to do it, as well. And I know you have so many practical strategies for this. Walk us through some of the ways that we can help our kids, like you've mentioned a couple already, but rewire our brain with these everyday activities at home.

Carol: Absolutely. So, as I was mentioning before, there's different things that you can participate in that can facilitate certain state of being for the nervous system, but also you can rewire the brain by structuring these activities very purposefully, very intentionally with a specific purpose. So, for example, when you have, like, an over-responsive child with lots of climbing on the ceilings, excessive talking, over-reactive, anxious, tantrums, we always like to add in activities, such as heavy work and lifting with weighted balls, there's joint compression. So, any of the deep pressure activities with a steam roller, joint compressions to the joints, lots of that pounding therapy. You do our activity like that for a few minutes, you can then feel how that can soothe, and organize, and release the chemicals that can help you feel neurologically calm. But then, what about those friends who are a bit under-responsive, right? There's a delay in their responding to question. They're more sedentary. They may, you know, be difficult to engage or withdrawn. They may even appear lazy or to have behavioral problems. For those friends, the key here, like it is with all of our activities and strategies, is to look at those behaviors as a reflection of the state of the brain and then choose activities that can get you into the better state you're trying to be in. So for those under-responsive friends, you can layer in activities in their visual schedule, jumping on the trampoline, or doing some skipping and running before these under-responsive friends are being asked to do some other activities, jumping jacks, contralateral jumps, swimming. All of these types of things, if you layer them in intentionally, really can help the brain recognize this better state of being. Then if you do it and purposefully schedule this every day, and then it becomes a regular routine for the brain, the brain just knows how to function.

We've trained it to be in the state. And having that structure and neural framework that's there is just so important to allow for you to access all of those higher cognitive centers of the brain and that higher quality of life that you're trying to reach, but it just doesn't feel like you can get there yet. In our program, we also have very easy tools that we use to rewire the brain that are, like, accelerants now. So, you can take those everyday

activities, and you can add something that uses sound frequencies and bone conduction. We can actually build the neuron connections in the brain, just by exposing the brain to certain frequencies that are targeting specific parts of the brain and function. The individual participates in that and just like doing activities over and over that are useful and organizing to the brain, when you layer in an accelerating tool, like the ones that we have, you really can change. You can rewire the brain. You can change IQ points. We have children gain years worth of academic skills, such as language, arts, and math skills as measured on standardized assessments, getting a year's worth of those neurological skills in a several months timeframe with some of these listening programs. It's just amazing what we can do now to accentuate that process and give our friends the neurological skills and resiliency that they don't have. And that does include mom and dad as well because essentially, we're all going through this together and we could all use some neurological organization. And so, it really is so beneficial to know that with the neuroplasticity of the brain, which knows no age and no diagnoses, you can rewire the brain with some specific activities and patterns, and we just love to help our friends connect with those.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. And I think the important thing here too, like I mentioned in the beginning, so often these are things that are maybe facilitated through the school system or through special programs related to the school system. And the beauty of it is, these are things that even if that whole paradigm has changed, that parents now through programs like yours have access to at home. It can be so paradigm-shifting for the stress level of the whole family.

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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.

Can you talk a little bit more about how we can assess that neurological function at home? Because like I said, I think this is something that for a long time, parents just always assumed was the realm of specialist or that they needed a lot of outside help to do. And I love that your whole focus recently has been making these things available to parents in the home wherever they are.

Carol: Absolutely. And so, originally, we created our home program to reach that mom who was stuck in her home due to, you know, the severe state of their child, and that the neurological needs, it was just too distressing, and they couldn't or they could barely leave the home. They could get out for therapies, but it was very difficult to do. It's very time consuming, a lot of heavy lifting. And even then sometimes when they were there, they just weren't quite sure they were getting the changes they were looking for. So we made this whole program just for that mom so we can ship her or the protocols, the best ones to work for her and her child. We will connect her with occupational therapist that is board-certified all across the country. We connect her with a specialist who will walk her through the process, help her gain access to making these changes in her home. We make them accessible because... And with that, they can use it every day. And when you can give this type of input every day, you surely will change that trajectory so much more quickly and allow for those gains to be reached. So, now, what we've done is there's so many friends who can't leave their homes, right? The same kind of thing. So it has grown even more. And we have a growing group of friends and therapists, and we are connecting them with neurological calm, just by connecting them with this thought process, with our Calm Method, giving them the skills and the strength to change that trajectory with what they can in their own hands in their home. And then also, you can do a couple of little neurological tests, just a little wink and to see how severe are these issues? And should I reach out and speak to a specialist? Maybe I need more of those accelerating tools.

And that's absolutely something that you can test yourself. So a super quick one that we do, and it's very easy. It's especially for the vestibular system, and since that's the primary basic block of the central nervous system, of course, we assess it. Very easy though. It's from a standardized assessment, but since I'm not gonna put everybody through that, you have a cliff note of it is, as you stand, you have an individual stand on one foot with their eyes open and count to 10. You can learn a whole lot from an individual asking them to stand on one foot with their eyes open and count to 10. Most everybody can count to 10. Great. But what if you can't? What if they wiggle and fall over? Figure out the number that they wiggled and fell over on. If it was at a three, then they could stand for three seconds with their eyes open. If it was 10, that's great. Now move on to the next one. Stand with on one foot with your eyes closed and count how many seconds you can do that. If you can stand on one foot with your eyes open for 10 seconds, and then with your eyes closed for 10 seconds, you have an intact vestibular system. I don't expect you to have vestibular weaknesses or be carsick or prone to sedentary. You've got the basic skill and function. However, what if you're able to stand on one foot with your eyes open for 10 seconds, but when we asked you to close them, did you fall over at 3? If so, that let's you

know that you have a weakened vestibular system. And absolutely, there's protocols that we can begin and exercises that we can walk you through that begin to strengthen that immediately, very important, that vestibular to function, very basic building block.

We also have what's super helpful, is we have a Brain Harmony quiz. And we'll give you the link to that as well, Katie, because if you would like and that, you know... I feel like, you know, I'm making changes with the recommendations and I understand that I'm getting closer, but I feel like there's just something that's just a little more off than others within myself or within the children. So this quick neurological screen, it's a questionnaire, really can put some of these things into perspective for you, as well as you can call us and speak to a specialist, and we'll give you a free consult. We'll talk through some of these concerns that you have and help you put them into perspective on, "This is how severe that is. And here are different options for you." And then, again, like I mentioned, I want all your listeners to have access and be able to print out our steps to the Calm Method because they're concrete ways in there for you to just initially just begin to make those changes in your home right away, which is just so needed right now.

Katie: Absolutely. Okay. And a couple of things I wanna follow up on that you mentioned. Well, first of all, just now, you said you wouldn't expect someone to be carsick or motion sick if they had a well-developed vestibular system. For parents or even for myself, I've noticed at times, it's gotten a lot better, but I used to get really motion sick. Is this something we can actually help address by addressing the vestibular system?

Carol: Yes, it's one of my favorite things to do. Because I was a car sick friend. I was a sensory friend and then I still am. And one of those though I used to be carsick as well. And so I couldn't read in the car. And it was... I always had to look out of the window. I had to have air condition on my face or the window rolled down. I had to have... Everybody in the car was an active participant in keeping me from being carsick. But then as life goes on, you mature a little bit, you compensate for that. Different periods of life may get better or weaker. But once I started to work in pediatrics many years ago, we're at 23 years now, and I started doing all of this work specifically targeting the different aspects of the central nervous system and specifically the vestibular system, when you organize that, we found that our friends, I just by doing the work, and participating, and having others go through these activities, and me helping to facilitate the dynamic movement of the head with these activities, my vestibular system got strengthened. And then when I layered in the tools that I'm talking about, like the Focus Unit, or the Safe and Sound Protocol, or our Brain Harmony Vestibular Protocol, I started to participate that. Now, I can read in the car. I can type on my computer. I can actually go between two different screens at the same time while driving in the car. It's remarkable. And then what's so significant is we have this beautiful testimony of this mom, Cassie, and her family of six. And they came to us, and different family members had different areas that they needed to work on. But vestibular is, of course, where we went to first. And dad needed it more than any other family member, which was it was a little surprising, but absolutely we worked with him to build it.

But his son, who is actually older, like 12, he would get so carsick on the way to school, that it took him several hours to recover at school before he could, you know, feel himself and engage in the level that he's used to. Well, that's just too much time, you know, in recovery for this poor friend, knowing that all you have to do is organize the vestibular system and address the semicircular canals inside the inner ear. It's the science. It may

sound complicated with the protocols to organize it are not. And we've made it super simple and easy to do. So, something like vestibular, like car sickness, that's an easy thing to kind of give yourself a neurological snapshot. If you're car sick, you should just assume that your vestibular system is in a weakened state, and you could benefit from participating in this or even say like you have a little friend and you're the mom, you're modeling, you're leading the way, "Let's go to the playground." You're running, jumping, diving. You run up the slide and you're trying to squish your body in because you're dying to get down the slide, but you notice your child or a friend at the park is standing at the bottom of the slide, and there's no way they are going up that slide. The whole idea of having their feet leave the floor is very, very noxious to their system, very disorienting, and can send them into a fight or flight. So, of course, they're not going to play with a balance or sense of direction and go through a slide because their system is so weak. Those are little bitty ways for you to just measure in your own right. I'm giving you that ability to look with little neurological cues and snapshots of how intact their nervous system is, and specifically the vestibular.

Katie: So cool. Okay, and you also mentioned contralateral movements. And I'm curious to hear, just on my own curiosity, how this fits in as well because I just started an experiment with the local track athletes who are training for the Olympics in pole vaulting. I'm gonna do their entire year-long training circuit with them, mainly to break kind of my inner filter that I'm not an athlete because if I can complete that, I'm actually...I've done an athletic protocol for a whole training season. But one thing we're doing now in the early phase, they call it contralateral training, where you're moving, like, if it would be your left leg and right arm in different movements, which increases your aerobic capacity in the way we're doing it. But I've noticed that seems to also really help my balance. So, explain what contralateral is and how that's a good tool.

Carol: Absolutely. So, we talk about contralateral jumps and interhemispheric connections between both sides of the brain. All of those are areas that is OTs and helping families function at their highest level possible, are all absolutely... It's ways to assess even. If those bilateral coordination tasks, like jumping jacks or opposing sides of the body, those different things you were telling me, if those is difficult for you, it really means you just need to do them more. And then once you build those interhemispheric connections, it does strengthen your entire neurological framework that allows you to have better access between both sides of the brain and both sides of the body. Doing any of our accelerated tools, for example, right, anything with the sound frequencies and the bone conduction, any of those accelerating tools, we add specific movement patterns, whether it's reflex integration, whether it's bilateral coordination tasks, whether it's specific balance in vestibular, whether it's specific ocular motor, movements of the eyes, right, that's directly anatomically connected to the vestibular apparatus, as well as to our auditory processing. So by doing all of these multi-sensory activities with specific movements for the brain, you can absolutely accelerate your neurological integrity, your strength, and your resiliency, that will then and only then allow you to reach out of your comfort zone and build skills out of that state that you were stuck in or you felt you were stuck in.

And I really like your example about feeling like you weren't an athletic person. Dear goodness, everybody should just participate, you know, in our program, get yourselves into exactly even, like, with the pole vaulting that you're doing because to me, not being able to participate in any of those physical things that you want to in the way that you want your body to respond or as intended, it just means that it's not as organized as it can be. And we can make it organized. We have so many things that are easily accessed, and really just the CliffsNotes, and really bridge that gap really quickly to function bilateral coordination, interhemispheric

connection, and quite honestly, you know, that's that higher cognitive centers of the brain, where mood, creativity, and social engagement can be found. So, I just love that.

Katie: It's so cool. I love that there are these simple things, and I think they do make a big difference. I've seen it in my own life. And you talk about it a little bit but, like, just walk us through kind of as we get close to wrapping up, how things like you mentioned, words like executive function, and communication and happiness, how those are direct reflection of states of our brain and how we can use that to our advantage to nurture those states in our home?

Carol: Absolutely. And so all of these steps that we've been discussing today in the Calm Method, first providing comfort, then to activate certain parts of your brain to learn and rewire the brain so that you can actually master the higher cognitive center of the brain, the areas, and you can actually access things like executive function and your ability to communicate more about how you're feeling and connect with others. And from that, just easier access to happiness. And it comes from... All of these things come from neurological organization. And by putting down the steps to get there in four easy ways, then you begin at that first step and just start grooming yourself, grooming your home, grooming the process, fitting in the pieces that makes sense for you, fitting in the activities that change, and help your family, and yourself feel and function better. When you can feed the system what it needs, activate what it needs, then it's learning how to function. You can only then access this higher cognitive state of the brain. That's why happiness can feel so far away when we are stressed, and overwhelmed, and overloaded. It's like physically, you can't get there. Just like when friends would come to their OT sessions, and then we would give them this neurological organization, and the safety, and the pulse available regulation, and then they went to their speech sessions. The speech pathologist just love this. And they run out of the room and say, "Oh, my goodness, what did you just do with this child? I've got more speech and language development than I ever have. What did you do?"

Well, we walked him through the calm process. We did these basic steps that can allow them to access the parts of the brain that require the foundation of the central nervous system to be built and intact. And you can do it yourself just by following these steps. So, it's so important to relieve the suffering for so many families, as we try to regain regularity, and some calm, and some predictability. And you can do it with these steps and really change how you're feeling, how your family is feeling. And then you move into this next chapter with more neurological organization that you had when it started.

Katie: I love it. So, two-part question to wrap up. Are there a couple of just simple movements or activities that you would recommend across the board for families to do? Obviously, like you said there's specifics, depending on the particular thing a person's working on. But are there any kind of good movements or activities that as moms, we can just do with our kids and that also benefit us? And then the second part of that question being, for someone who does have a more specific thing they want to address, where's a great starting point with you? And I'll make sure, of course, all those links are in the show notes, at wellnessmama.fm so people can find you and get started.

Carol: Absolutely. So, the first thing I always do is we wanna try and get more movement into our bodies and we want to get more movement where it feels good. So, essentially, you know, making sure that your head is moving in a bunch of different planes, I can get specific for you. But essentially, in general, you've got to be moving up and down, and side-to-side, and backwards and forwards. So whatever activities can help you do that, the better. So, for example, when it's super rainy, like we have a hurricane kind of coming this way, and there's not a lot of things to do outside of the house, maybe our friends have been or/and ourselves have been more on the screens or doing things a little more sedentary, we pulled our trampoline alone in the backyard, and my son gets in there, and he does and, you know, we're not jumping super crazy and super high. What we're doing instead is we're doing... He likes to do these forward rolls forwards and backwards. We like to do sideways rolls as well. We do jumping jacks, these scissor jumps, like right arm, left leg, then switch, left arm, right leg, all of these things to help keep our system engaged, and awakened, and functioning. And then, from there, you can layer in more specific things to meet whatever part of your system needs to be more awakened at that time.

Katie: Very cool. Okay, so you've mentioned a lot of your different programs. I've got links, I believe for all of those. They'll all be at wellnessmama.fm. Where would you send people that first starting point? To the quiz? Or if they have something more acute, would you recommend them doing consult with you guys first thing to figure out what direction to go?

Carol: I love the consult because they're just so useful. Our moms call up, and they'll tell us about the state of where they are, and the state of their family members. Usually, it's one family member that is having the most difficult, which is the catalyst for them reaching out to us. But you'll get a developmental specialist on the phone with you. We pull out what your pain points are, figure out what your priorities are. And then we'll lay out for you the specific protocols that we can give you and get started right away. We're starting to change that trajectory. That is absolutely the easiest and fun way to connect with finding out more about what you can do to make this better for you and your family. But we also have a really quick Brain Harmony quiz. And it's a series of questions. And I really liked the questions because it starts to hit all of the different areas of the central nervous system, vestibular, your sensory system, emotional regulation, how your nervous system is functioning day to day. And with that, you'll get a nice summary of, these are some areas of deficits and these are ideas that you can start using right now to change that trajectory. And then here are some of our protocols and some accelerating tools to really help you along because there's so much suffering, and families just don't know how to much change, and how much relief an organization and exceeding expectations as far as academic achievement that you can get these days just from using the tools, the order in which we use them, and then some of these accelerating tools because that suffering is just something that is excessive if I know that there's something that we can do to change it. And we have fantastic protocols to do so.

Katie: It's so great. I hope that this conversation has inspired a lot of families to move more and with their heads more, and learn about and focus on vestibular development, and creating that safe place and the calm. I've definitely seen how those kind of changes can make such a big impact, especially with kids. And I think we can all use a little bit more calm right now. So, thanks again, as always, Carol for sharing your time and your resources. If you guys are listening, all the things she has mentioned will be in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm so you can find them. She has some great incredible free resources and that free consult to get you guys started and figure out where to go. And her information is helpful, I feel like across the board to

families, whether you have an acute thing you're trying to work through or not. So I'm definitely encouraging you guys to check it out. But Carol, thanks again for the time and being here again.

Carol: It's my pleasure, Katie, and I'm looking forward to meeting you one day, hopefully flying through the air over a pole vault or something to that extent because that is a beautiful image of you that I'd like to stay in my mind.

Katie: Oh, I love it. You'll have to come and join one day. And thanks as always to all of you for listening, for sharing your most valuable resource, your time, with both of us today. We're so grateful that you did. And we hope that you are staying happy, calm, and sane in your homes. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama Podcast."

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