



Episode 377: How to Overcome Stress Cravings
and Weight Gain with The Watkins Method

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 brought to you by Wellnesse, my new personal care company that is based on the recipes I've been making at home in my kitchen for decades. Many "clean" products simply don't work and this is why I have spent the last decade researching and perfecting recipes for products that not only eliminate toxic chemicals but contain ingredients that work better than their conventional alternatives and that nourish your body from the outside in. I'm so excited to finally share these products with you and wanted to tell you about our brand new dry shampoo! It can be used various ways. You can sprinkle it in clean hair to add volume and to extend time between washes, sprinkle it in hair that has not been washed in a day or two to absorb oil or sweat and you can work in to color treated hair to maintain color-treated hair by not having to wash as often. It contains oil-absorbing kaolin clay and volume-boosting tapioca which work together to refresh hair at the roots. Lavender oil and cactus flower help to balance scalp and strands' natural pH. We even added hibiscus for healthy hair growth. You can check it out and try it at wellnesse.com and my tip is to grab a bundle to save or subscribe and save as well!

Katie: Hello, and 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 completely natural and safe from the outside in personal care products, like hair care, toothpaste, and hand sanitizer.

This episode addresses a topic that is top of mind for a lot of people right now. I've heard from a lot of you guys about stress cravings, weight gain, and just how difficult it is to navigate healthy food choices right now with all of the additional stress in the world. And I'm here with Brittany Watkins, who I've interviewed before, but wanted to bring back specifically for this topic. She is an internationally recognized speaker, author, and trainer. And she has programs specific to this very subject, with things like emotional eating, food cravings,

and self-sabotage. In fact, she's one of the top experts in the world on using something called Emotional Freedom Technique for addressing emotional eating and weight loss. And we go into that in this episode. But we also talk about what I think is a really important distinction here that a lot of you guys brought up on a recent blog post.

So I shared in podcast Episode 309, if you're interested in listening, my own trauma recovery story, and how that eventually led to a pretty massive weight loss as a side effect. The important thing there is that the weight loss was a side effect of the inner work and the inner health. And it was mainly a reflection of that. I got so many follow-up questions about what I specifically did or was eating or how I was exercising, that I wrote a blog post to address that side as well, address more of the physical aspects of weight loss. And the reason I did that is I know when I was still in that mindset and struggling with weight myself, that's what I was looking for. I thought I was trying to find answers on how to lose weight. So I did it to answer all those questions, write a post focused on the physical side of that. But I don't want that to be construed as I think that weight loss is the goal because like I said, for me, while I thought weight loss was the goal, and it was my focus for so many years, it was actually a side effect of dealing with the inner mindset side, that ended up being much more important. And I very much do think that people can be healthy at a variety of sizes. I think that's a very nuanced topic. And there's a lot of confounding factors there. But I don't think people need to necessarily be a certain size or a certain weight to be directly healthy. But I can say definitively, for me, that I am actually physically measurably healthier on labs, that my Hashimoto's is in remission, and that all of my markers are in a healthier range now. Also, again, not probably because of the weight loss, but probably also as a side effect of doing the inner work, just like the weight loss was a side effect. So I wanted to bring up that topic. We go in deeper on that in this episode as well. I think you'll find this really fascinating, especially if you've struggled with maybe cravings or stress eating, understandably, over the last nine months. And we talk about how while this hasn't been an ideal year in many ways, it has been an incredible teacher, and how we can use it to our advantage to learn and to improve internally. So, without further ado, let's join Brittany. Brittany, welcome back to the podcast.

Brittany: Hi, thanks for having me.

Katie: So we've already done one episode together, I'll make sure that's linked at wellnessmama.fm. If you guys are meeting Brittany for the first time today, that's a great starting point as well. But I would love to recap some of that and also maybe go a little deeper on some of those points that we touched on last time, realizing there's gonna be some special considerations related to all of the stressors specific to this year. But, to start broad, can you kind of walk us through how trauma can show up on the body as extra weight and potentially as other problems as well? Because I've shared this publicly, I've lost about 80 pounds in the last couple of years, and a lot of it went back to dealing with trauma for me, and a lot of people have asked follow up questions related to that. And I know we touched on this a little bit in our first podcast, but I'd love to be able to go deeper and to provide some deep answers on that.

Brittany: Yeah, well, that was one of the biggest missing links for me. I mean, I've struggled with my own weight issues and emotional eating disorders for a long time. And, you know, when people were trying to deal with it even, you know, from the top down with diet and exercise, but even some of the esoteric stuff like

mindset work and positive affirmations, it just never went deep enough for me. And it wasn't until I discovered trauma work and how to apply tapping, which is the method that I teach, specifically to trauma around weight issues, that was when I was able to release weight.

So, you know, yeah, trauma is just one of these things that we wouldn't think can show up as extra weight in our body. But, for instance, I came up with this, you know, sort of simpler way for people to understand how trauma affects our bodies by calling them weight loss blockers. So I discovered that there are seven main weight loss blockers, that when we experience a particular kind of trauma, it will basically make our body want to be fat. It'll make our body want to hold on to extra weight because subconsciously, it thinks that it's protecting us by putting the extra weight on. So, like, for example, you know, if your parents when you were a kid used to yell at you or used to make you sit at the dinner table until all your food was eaten off your plate, that can give your brain a subconscious message that you have to eat all the food on your plate in order to make them happy.

So subconsciously, what you'll do is, you'll have anxiety about throwing food away, or you'll feel stressed, or you'll feel guilty, or you'll feel ashamed any time you leave food on your plate and you know it's gonna be thrown away because subconsciously, your parents basically, or whoever was telling you this, created a trauma. I mean, traumas can be big and it can be small. So basically what happens is that created a trauma loop in your brain, that every time you're in that particular situation, you're feeling bad and your brain is getting actually the wrong message, but it's the way that your brain was coded to eat more food than your body actually needs.

So, yeah, I mean, it took me probably 15 years to figure out all 7 of the weight-loss blockers and I'm even discovering new ones now. But it's a real thing. And, you know, people struggle with extra weight for a really, really long time. And, you know, what I find is they're going about it in the wrong way, they're not addressing the trauma, and specifically dealing with it in, you know, a particular way, which is the way that we do it in our therapy.

Katie: Yeah, and I wanna go into the specifics of that a little bit more. But one thing also I feel like it's important to say at this point in the conversation, I shared a post on Instagram recently about the nutritional and physical side of things I did for weight loss. And the title of that post was, "How to lose weight," basically what worked for me. And I actually took some heat, which is understandable, from some people who said, you know, "You shouldn't focus on the weight loss," which I actually very much agree with. But this was a hard-learned lesson for me. And the reason I wanted to bring this up is, I had done a podcast, Episode 309, long before that post, that talked about the trauma side, and the mindset side, and all of the inner work I had to do to move past that.

And what I learned through that process was that I thought weight loss was the focus. And it turns out, losing the weight was simply a side effect of learning to be at peace on the inside. And so I don't ever wanna overlook that point. It's so, so core and so key to I think the whole conversation. But, that said, once I had dealt with the inner side, these changes somewhat happened naturally in my life, but I did just inadvertently

change some diet and lifestyle factors. And people wanted to know those specifics as well, which is why I shared them. So, I just wanted to speak to the point. And I know you talk about this as well. It's not that losing weight is the end all be all or that we shouldn't love and accept ourselves at any size.

That's certainly isn't what I'm trying to say. I learned, like I mentioned, certainly, that weight loss was the side effect. But I also know, looking back, when I was struggling with that, and before I understood the inner trauma connection, I was looking for things like how to lose weight. So I wanted to be able to meet people where they were so that I could start the conversation about, you know, the health side and the diet side is important, but it's not where it starts. You have to start inside. So I just wanna bring that up. I'm sure you run into the body positivity, body neutrality thing quite often probably in the work that you do, right?

Brittany: Yeah. I mean, that's one of the things that's so interesting about my work is that, you know, when people come in, they have this goal that they wanna lose weight, we don't talk about diet or nutrition or we barely even talk about exercise. We don't talk about any of that stuff. It's basically like going through intensive therapy. You know? It is focused on some food-related things, but a lot of it is not related to food at all. You know, we talked about this on the last episode where when women have been, their body boundaries have been violated, which basically is somebody making them feel uncomfortable sexually. It could be small or big. That's one of the biggest reasons that people will put on extra weight.

Nobody would think...Logically, people wouldn't think that it has anything to do with holding on to extra weight. But, yeah, it does. So, yeah, I mean, I agree with you to get back to the point of having it not be about weight loss. Obviously, I do have a company that helps people release weight, and that's the way that we say it, and actually release fat not weight because cancer patients release weight or lose weight, we wanna release fats, right? If you wanna actually change your body. But once they come in and they start doing the work, we don't even talk about weight loss. That's the last thing that we talk about. And then, similar to your story, to what you just said, once they go through the intensive work and they do all the healing work on themselves. I always tell them, "Listen, at the end of this..." You know, that's always everyone's next question is, "Okay, what should I eat? What diet should I follow?"

And I always say, "Listen, when you get to the end of it, you're actually gonna have a much better relationship with your body." And intuitively, you're probably just gonna start to follow a healthier eating plan and you're just gonna be attracted to eating healthier foods. That's the natural way the body does it. Once you give the body the message, "Hey, I don't need this extra fat on my body. We're safe now. We're not in danger. We're at peace now." You've processed all these things that were making your body think that it needed to hold on to this extra weight, the body goes, "Oh, okay, cool." And so it just says, "Okay, I don't need that cookie at dinner. I can choose salad instead of pasta," you know. And it's just a natural process.

And so, you know, natural weight loss, I know it sounds like, urgh. When I was going through my struggle, if somebody told me that they lost weight naturally, I would wanna kill them. So, you know, I know how annoying that term can be, but it really can be once you process the internal turmoil basically that is going on subconsciously. This is not stuff that people are aware of. But, you know, when you're struggling with eating

disorders or extra weight and you've tried other things, and they haven't worked, usually, you know, the cause of it is this sort of, you know, underlying turmoil that we're not programmed in our society to really look at.

Katie: Yeah, like I said, I think I ignored that or resisted that idea for a lot of years. And during those years, I tried to, like weight loss was a battle that I felt like I was fighting, and I felt like I was constantly trying to punish myself or to, like, force my will to have an iron will and choose only the healthiest things. And that shift was so incredible and so noticeable. Once I dealt with that, first of all, I was so much less stressed. I didn't even realize how much mental energy was going to that battle on a daily basis. But, like you said, there was no more fight when it came to choosing healthy foods or if I wasn't hungry, and my body just did not want food. And if I had tried to eat when I wasn't hungry, my body would have just said no. And I was able to listen so much better to my body. So I wasn't fighting it. And I felt like, for the first time I was working with my body and not against it, and the process just became so much easier. I know we talked about it a little bit in the last episode. But, on that note, what are some of the ways we can start to overcome trauma? Because I know I've shared my story in pieces on the podcast before, but it can seem like an overwhelming hurdle to conquer or continue like something that's gonna take a really long time. And the beauty of it is that neither of those things has to be true. But walk us through how we can start to unravel and overcome that trauma process.

Brittany: Okay. So, my history is that I struggled with emotional eating a lot. Starting from the time I was 15, I got kicked out of my house. I was homeless. I grew up in a very religious family, who basically cast me out. So there was obviously a lot of trauma there and a lot of trauma even before that. So, my emotional eating started then. I was really, really, really lucky though to find a therapist who taught me how to use a method called EFT, Emotional Freedom Techniques or tapping. So I used tapping in therapy to deal with all of my emotional issues that I was struggling with. So, you know, I didn't think about it for my weight issues at that point. And I think, you know, my weight was kind of or my cravings had just started at that point, so I didn't really, you know, know if I had a weight problem yet.

I started using tapping, you know, just to help deal with everything that happened with my family, to help love myself better, to not be so angry about everything that happened. And, over time, what ended up happening was, I found that the regular EFT, so EFT is a nine-point system that basically anybody can do to themselves any time they have a stressful feeling or they feel anxious. So it's an amazing technique. I love it so much. I'm so passionate about it, that's why I talk about it, and I have a whole business around it. So, I love when people are empowered to heal themselves in the moment and they don't need to wait for a therapist or they don't need to, you know, look outside of them for the answer. So that's why I love, you know, regular EFT.

But what I found when I was dealing with my weight struggle is that the regular EFT method that they were teaching us didn't work for my weight issues. And so over...Oh my gosh, it was a big, big struggle. One day while I was really struggling with this chocolate bar, I remember I knew that I was...You know, I'd reached the point, you know, most people that are listening to this podcast, you've reached the point where I call consciously incompetent, which is, you know that you're eating when you're not really hungry, you just don't know how to stop it.

So, I was at that point where I knew that I was eating, I knew that I wasn't really hungry, and I had this chocolate bar in front of me, and I was just telling myself, "Man, I don't wanna eat it. I don't wanna eat this," you know. But I really wanted to do it at the same time, and we've all had those moments. So I remember in that moment, and this was, you know, the billionth time I'd had a fight with food. And I remember, in that moment, I heard a voice. And the voice started giving me instructions. And it said, "Push the chocolate bar away." And I pushed it away. And it said, "Okay, sit back, start tapping on these points." I said okay. And then it asked me or I just heard these series of questions. And I went through these series of questions. And after about 10 minutes, I looked down at the chocolate bar, and I didn't want it anymore.

Basically what happened was, it was a combination of tapping and regression therapy, NLP, shamanic soul retrieval, which were all methods that I had been studying for years and years to try to get to the answer, to try to get to the root cause of what was making me overeat. And basically, in this moment, you know, my higher self, my angels, who knows what it was, or, you know, maybe my brain, put all of the information that I had learned together into this one technique. And I found with this one particular technique, I could, in that moment, whenever I wanted to eat, and I knew I wasn't really hungry, I could push the food away, do this process and not feel deprived anymore.

And basically, what I noticed happening is that whenever I wanted to eat, the process, basically one of the questions is, okay, push the food away from you, sit back, close your eyes, float back in time, and tell me how old you are. And you have to answer really quickly. I'll just kind of tell you the questions because I think people will be interested in them. So sit back and go back in time and tell me how old you are. And what I found was that with every emotional urge I had, it was connected to a traumatic experience that I had had in the past. And it was usually from 0 to, you know, about 10 or 12 years old. Most of them were between 0 and 8, which is when your unconscious mind, basically, you're operating unconsciously, you don't have the will to decide yes or no about things.

So it was always going back to a specific event. And usually, the events were little, you know. I remember one time going back to an event where somebody dropped a glass on the floor, and it broke, and it startled me. Some of it was, you know, when my parents were yelling at me, or when I got punished for doing something bad, or, you know, somebody's saying something to me on the playground. And so what I found was that the food and the compulsion for food, the way that I was asking the questions was actually taking me to the traumas that needed to be healed in my brain. And then when I applied this method, when I got to this specific trauma, within 10 minutes, I had healed that trauma and usually two others. Usually, there's three traumas attached, which don't take a whole lot of time to heal. Once I'd heal those traumas, within about 10 minutes, when you go back and you look at the food, the desire for the food is gone.

So I always tell people, you know, if you have an emotional eating disorder or you're struggling with food, the food is actually trying to show you, the food will show you what needs to be healed in order for you to stop this problem, and then actually, in order for you to step into your power and to be the person that you're meant to be on this planet. I truly believe that. I mean, I've been doing this work professionally now for 10 years. I've been doing it on myself for 20. And, you know, I have absolutely found that when I have healed my relationship with food, it has made me a more empowered, stronger, happier, you know, more self-assured

person just in every area of my life. And my students always attest to that as well. Does that make sense? Did I explain that okay?

Katie: It does. And I think the important key that I found and wanna highlight there is, these don't have to be major life-changing moments that you remember that were somehow, like, shocking or, you know, something in your childhood. I certainly had one instance from my high school years that absolutely was that kind of trauma. But I also found many instances from much earlier in childhood, to your point, that seem insignificant or seem very small. But in that child state, like, those things really stuck with me, and I didn't even realize how deeply, like you were saying, until I started doing that inner work and was surprised to find, wow, this one comment that a relative made at that birthday party stuck with me and made me feel shameful about eating certain foods for my whole life. And I didn't even consciously know that.

And so, I think the beauty of it is realizing there's probably these things that may not be things you consciously remember right now or that you think about often, that are influencing your daily behavior. And the beauty of that is, like you said, when you have food as the trigger, you get the chance to look at those things and to learn from them. For people listening, a lot of us are moms, and I know my mind also goes to that point of realizing, okay, I probably have inadvertently done some things with my children that are going to leave them with things they're gonna work through as adults. As much as I hope that's not the case, the probability is good. What are some ways that we can, hopefully, with our kids, start from the beginning to have a healthy relationship with food or avoid some of maybe the more common pitfalls?

Brittany: Yeah, this is a really common question. I mean, the best one, obviously, is to be a good model for them. Right? So, you know, you having a healthy relationship with food, your kids, even if you hide the fact that you're overeating, you know, food at night, like if you put the kids...If you eat like a normal person all day long, and then the kids go to bed, and you're like, "Oh, finally, it's time for me," and you go to the cupboards, and that's when you, you know, go crazy on the food, your kids subconsciously pick that up. Kids are so smart and they're being programmed with your behaviors.

So, whether you like it or not, the way you are with yourself is you're transmitting that to them. So they're learning how to be people by watching you, both consciously and unconsciously. They're in a state of trance. From 0 to 8 years old, they're in a state of trance. So, that means they're picking up on things that are just floating around that aren't even said. They're picking up on patterns and behaviors that maybe you're not even showing them. I've had some clients tell me in the past, you know, when we go through this process, people get into like a, you know, sort of hypnotic state, and they will go back and remember that their parents or one of their parents was cheating on the other parent, but that wasn't something that they knew consciously in their childhood.

So, kids just pick up things without you, you know, even if you think you're doing a good job of hiding it, you're not. So, obviously, you know, dealing with a relationship with yourself is the very, very best way. You know, and then, you know, not pushing food. I know some kids are really picky about, you know, their foods. But, what I find with kids is that kids are usually very intuitive, and maybe they don't wanna eat their vegetables

when they're little. And, you know, in my opinion, I think that's okay because I really do feel that children know what their body needs and what their body wants. Children are growing a lot. So if they want a lot of like carbs or something like that when they're a kid, that's helping them grow, that's helping them create energy that's, you know, helping their bodies grow into the human that they're becoming. So, you know, I don't wanna throw anybody off because everybody has their own way to deal with food and their kids. But, you know, I just always say to trust your kids and to trust what they like, and what they don't like, and to let them eat to their satisfaction.

Katie: Completely aligned with you on that one. My thought has always been, I keep nutrient-dense foods in the house, all kinds of different foods because obviously I want to focus on micronutrients and making sure they are nourished, but I don't ever force any specific food or make them finish the food on their plate. And they have access to, whenever they're hungry, sources of healthy carbs, and proteins, and fats. And that's been a part of my shift. And I'm trying very hard to make that shift with my kids. And how I speak about food is there's never foods that are good or bad. I don't ever try to talk about depriving of certain foods, but also foods are treats. And we talk about food being a fuel and our bodies being these amazing tools that we can do incredible things and making sure that we fuel.

Because I also found, part of my journey, I ended up eating actually more once I dealt with the trauma. I realized I had been kind of chronic dieting and undereating for so long. And once I fixed that, I found myself needing more protein, for instance, and I had gotten a lot more active, and I needed more calories. And that has been something I would have been terrified to eat more food before I dealt with it. And now I view it as I'm fueling my body to do all these activities I want it to do. And I'm hoping that, you know, comes across to my kids. But I love that point of kids are so intuitive. And if they have constant access to nourishing foods, they'll naturally eat what they need.

That doesn't mean we should have, you know, junk food available at all hours of the day. But, to that point, with no foods being good or bad, I don't try to control what my kids eat outside of my home. I view it as my responsibility is to provide nutrient-dense food in our home, and their job as they get older is to navigate their relationship with food in a healthy way. So even if they're going to a friend's house or a birthday party, I don't ever try to tell them not to have the cake or tell them how they should make those food choices because I feel like they're gonna actually learn that. And they know if they don't feel very good if they eat something they're not used to eating, that's a great teacher for them. I don't have to create that shame cycle with food for them.

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 brought to you by Wellnesse, my new personal care company that is based on the recipes I've been making at home in my kitchen for decades. Many "clean" products simply don't work and this is why I have spent the last decade researching and perfecting recipes for products that not only eliminate toxic chemicals but contain ingredients that work better than their conventional alternatives and that nourish your body from the outside in. I'm so excited to finally share these products with you and wanted to tell you about our brand new dry shampoo! It can be used various ways. You can sprinkle it in clean hair to add volume and to extend time between washes, sprinkle it in hair that has not been washed in a day or two to absorb oil or sweat and you can work it in to color treated hair to maintain color-treated hair by not having to wash as often. It contains oil-absorbing kaolin clay and volume-boosting tapioca which work together to refresh hair at the roots. Lavender oil and cactus flower help to balance scalp and strands' natural pH. We even added hibiscus for healthy hair growth. You can check it out and try it at wellnesse.com and my tip is to grab a bundle to save or subscribe and save as well!

Katie: I feel like another thing right now that certainly I'm hearing from people about it, I'm guessing you are hearing much more so is all of the stress-related cravings that come with all the crazy events of this past year. And, on a personal level, I know the first two weeks of lockdown in our area, I got all these wonderful triggers that were teachers because I was angry, like, viscerally angry and wanted to, like, punch walls. I wasn't hungry. I wanted to work out all the time. And so I spent several days going, "What on earth is going on with me? Why am I angry? What what is causing this?" And I realized, part of that went back to my bigger trauma from high school and vowing in that moment that I would never feel helpless again. And I had made all these amazing constructs in my life so that I never had to feel helpless, and I had systems, and I controlled all the variables. And then this thing happened that was bigger than me that I couldn't control. And I felt like, metaphorically like I was being held down all over again. And so, my psyche was reacting by wanting to just come up swinging.

And so, it was actually a great opportunity to kind of face that and work through it. But I think a lot of us had our own experiences with all of the stress that comes with a massive life change like that that's happened in so many places. So, what are some tools...Well, first of all, what is causing a lot of these increased cravings? Because we hear the joke about the COVID 19, and people gaining weight, and all these cravings and there's memes about that all the time, and drinking margaritas for breakfast, and cupcakes are now a food group and all those things. What's causing all these extra cravings right now and what are some ways we can start to address that?

Brittany: Yeah, well, I mean, you actually did exactly the right thing when you started to notice your triggers is you ask yourself, "Okay, what's causing this? What is this reminding me of?" And remember when I was breaking down the steps of what to do when you feel triggered to eat food is you ask yourself, "Okay, flow back in time, how old am I right now? What's going on? What is my unconscious mind remembering?" So what is happening is it's triggering trauma. It's triggering, and this is gonna be different for everybody. But, see, the thing is, we as humans, we create coping mechanisms. Our brains are amazing. I mean, the fact that humans can go through the amount of stress, and anxiety, and trauma that, you know, we go through and still be high functioning people.

I mean, if you think about some of the worst things that have happened to you and how you felt in that moment, one of the most amazing things about the human mind is that we create this coping skill that pushes it way down to the back of our mind and it basically says, "Okay, we're gonna just move on with life. We're gonna pretend like that didn't happen." Well, when something happens that's similar to that thing that happened, the memory comes up and it goes, "Whoa, danger. Remember this happened last time? Don't let this thing happen again." And it gives us a warning sign. And usually, the warning sign comes in the form of stress and anxiety, and that's when people will use food to soothe that stress and anxiety. And so, I would say, for everybody it's different.

You know, you shared some of your coping mechanisms, which is like having everything in order and, you know, creating systems that you control, right? That's one of your coping skills. You know, there's people that will, you know, go shopping, you know, or people...I know one of my coping skills is travel. So I'm always, you know, trying to go somewhere new and travel somewhere new. We all have these different ways, or, you know, some people really like to have everything organized, or, you know, some people want everything messy, right? So we all have these ways and things that we do to make ourselves feel safe and feel good. And we build our lives around that. And sometimes we don't know the feelings that we're masking by doing these things until we can't do those things anymore.

So I think that's, for most people, that's what's happening, is it's bringing up feelings of, you know, not feeling safe, not having freedom. You know, I mean, all of us have felt unsafe at some point in our lives. All of us, you know, have had our freedom taken away in some ways. You know, when we're a kid and our parent is telling us yes and no, right? So these things are very primal emotions that are coming up for us. And, you know, nothing like this has ever happened before. So everyone's got these traumas coming up to the surface that they're, you know, used to. And I know a lot of my friends, they're really busy people. They like really busy packed schedules and they like to go, go, go, go, go all the time. And, you know, that's another coping skill. So, all the people that I know that were really busy, that like to go, go, go all the time, they had a real battle, you know, with that, right? Where, "Okay, now I can't be busy all the time, so all of these "Demons" came back up to the surface." But see, if you're not asking yourself the right questions, and you don't know where to look, you're just gonna think, "Oh, I'm just really hungry right now. Oh, I just want a margarita for breakfast."

That's not actually what's happening. What's happening is that you're subconsciously being reminded of a time where you felt unsafe or something was uncomfortable or scary to you, and that's causing the stress and anxiety. That's causing you to wanna, you know, have these behaviors and use these coping skills. So if you

don't know how to ask the right questions, then, you know, you're just gonna think, "Oh, okay, I just have a bunch of cravings," but that's actually not what's happening.

Katie: That makes so much sense. So, for people who aren't familiar, walk us through how the tapping specifically helps us to address those things and then to release them?

Brittany: Yeah. So, the hippocampus is an area of our brain that stores our memories. And what we can see now with brain imaging devices is that when the memories are negative, we actually see these little indentations in the hippocampus. So, I always describe the hippocampus like a sponge with a bunch of holes in it. So, you know, we have millions of little indentations because we have so many things that happened to us that, you know, were negative or, you know, made our body feel anxious or stressed. So what happens is when your body feels anxious or stressed, when something bad happens, the amygdala, which is the body's fight or flight system, sounds an alarm and it makes us feel bad. It makes us feel stressed, or anxious, or scared, or angry. And so, what's happening...And, you know, the amygdala tells your body to feel these emotions, right?

So, what happens is a bad memory gets triggered, okay? You remember, you know, like, for instance, you know, somebody's saying something bad to you on a playground. Maybe somebody doesn't say something bad to you, but they have, like, the same tone in their voice or that person just reminds you of the kid that said this thing to you. You're not gonna put this together consciously, but it will trigger the amygdala, the fight or flight response in your body. So somebody will say something to you and you'll feel this stress and anxious feeling. Well, what tapping does is tapping actually zeroes in on that memory. So remember the question that I asked is, okay, you push the food away, go back in time, how old are you right now? What's going on? So you actually go back and you remember that memory, you experienced the memory, you describe the memory while you're stimulating the acupressure points.

And what happens when you stimulate the acupressure points while you're thinking about this bad thing that happened is it sends a flood of serotonin to the brain, and it actually severs the fight or flight response. So, you can still think about that bad memory but it doesn't make the alarm signal in your body go off. So, somebody can have, you know, that same tone with you, but you're not gonna remember that it reminded you of, you know, somebody on the playground or you're not gonna have a problem with it. Or, you know, I don't know, basically anything...People are getting triggered all the time.

So what happens is, over time, when you use tapping more and more, is you're basically healing your hippocampus which is like your memory sponge. So when we go in and we look at what happens when you use tapping is we'll notice that these indentations actually disappear. So the indentations are what tells your brain, tells your body to release the fight or flight response, turn on the alarm. So when we use tapping it severs that connection, so you can remember bad things that have happened to you, but it's almost like it happened somebody else.

In fact, they say that, with people that need to go on the witness stand about things that have happened that are, you know, traumatic, it's known within our community that if they need to give a good, you know, testimonial that's believable, that they shouldn't actually tap on their experience because you become so disconnected from it. Like, when I was starting tell my story, I've actually been criticized for this as well. When I started to tell my story, I go, "Well, my story happened when I was 15. I was kicked out and I was homeless." I say it like it's, you know, so blasé, so easy. And, of course, I've told the story a bunch, but I've also done so much tapping on it. It's like it happened to somebody else or it's like it happened in a different lifetime. I don't have any of the same stress responses when I think about that time than most people do.

So that's what's so cool about this, is that, you know, people who have gone through really challenging situations, or, even if you haven't, even if you just had little things that happened to you, when you sever the alarm system, when you sever this response, it just makes you a lot more relaxed. So you'll notice that you're just not so uptight. You don't feel so overwhelmed. You're not stressed. You're not anxious. You know, that's kind of the overarching, you know, change that happens when you use tapping to heal your brain basically is what's happening.

Katie: That makes so much sense. And yeah, it's fascinating. I would not have probably believed just how profoundly that can change until I experienced it. And so, now I mention, you know, to a lot of people because, like I said, I felt like I went to battle with myself for so, so long. And I was fighting on the wrong fronts, basically. Like, I was fighting an enemy on one side and the actual root of it was somewhere totally different. And that's that trauma side. And the inner side is so powerful that you really, like I've said it so many times, that you can't fight your way through that. You can't punish yourself thin. You can't hate yourself healthy. Like, you really do have to do that inner work. And the beauty of it is, because there are triggers, we have the opportunity to do that, and to set a good example, hopefully, for our kids. You've mentioned that you work with a lot, I know you've worked with thousands and thousands of women on this and helping them overcome it in different ways. Can you talk about some of the programs you have for that? And, of course, I'll make sure they're linked in the show notes as well.

Brittany: Yeah, sure. So, I mean, one of the things that I'll just give away as a free gift is, the technique that helps people stop emotional eating, the one that I was describing with all the questions, I share that in a free video. So if people want that technique, I give it all away for free. They can go through the process. You know, people always will write us comments on social media, and emails, and stuff saying how life-changing it is. So, that they can get at emotionaleatingexpert.com. And you can, you know, send all the links and stuff.

But, yeah, you know, our main program is an intensive six-month program, where we basically go in and we heal all of the traumas that cause extra weight. So, you know, most people look at it as like a complete brain reset. You know, and everybody has different traumas, but what I found is I found a pattern with people who, you know, where the trauma shows up on their body, I've basically figured out the system of why it does that. So I know the right the questions to ask. I know where to look for the traumas. You know, a lot of people will say, "Well, I don't even know where to look. I don't, like, you know, I don't know what happened to me. How can I know if I don't remember it?" This is what we cover. I actually have coaches that work one-on-one with people.

And that's the best way to do this. If you wanna really, really go deep and heal, people that get the best results are the ones that work with a coach, and they go really deep, and commit to it. You know, people will say to me when they're on the other side of it, that they did more work in six months of working with me than they have their whole lives of doing therapy and all the other alternative methods that they've tried. And I work with people that are, you know, PhDs that are, you know, very, very, you know, highly accredited people that have done lots of things and studied a lot of modalities.

And I always hear that feedback. So, you know, for me, this is what I was born to do. I was just completely obsessed with solving this problem. And, you know, I'm really happy to say that I found the system and the formula. Six months might sound like a long time to somebody, but when you've struggled with something for so long for your whole life, you know, what's six months, right? Because one people are on the other side of it, and, you know, we've tracked people now for 10 years that have graduated from year 1, the problem doesn't come back. So, it's permanent. It's permanent change forever.

So, you know, I always tell people, it's not fun. It's hard work. It's not like a bunch of positive affirmations that make you feel good. You're purging. It's difficult, heavy stuff, but it's a safe space. You know, we have amazing, amazing support. We have amazing coaches. The other girls in the program too, we introduce them, we have something called the Buddy System, where we introduce you to other people. And we always hear just how, like, amazing the new connections are and the new friendships that are formed. We have girls that have met their best friends, you know, in the class. So, it's a small community, but it's a really tight-knit community of women that are struggling with the same things and going about healing it in the same ways as well. So, yeah, that's what...And so we talk more about that program at bittanywatkins.com or you can go directly to the information at thinkandthin.com.

Katie: Perfect. And like I said, those links will be in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm so you guys can find them easily. And I think that, like, circles back perfectly to the beginning of the conversation of focusing on the fact that, at the end of the day, it's actually, like you said, not about the weight loss at all. If anything, like releasing fat is a better focus. But even beyond that, it really is about the inner side, and feeling at peace, and feeling calm and comfortable in our bodies because it's our body, not because it needs to be, or look, or measure a certain way. So, to the people that brought up that point, I think that is so important and I'm not advocating anyone ever being a certain size or doing this for looks reasons. I feel like this was such an important topic to talk about because the weight loss for me was a side effect of much more important work. And I would a hundred times again choose to do that inner work and to feel the peace I feel now even if it didn't lead to the same physical changes because that was just a side effect. And the freedom of how I feel now was worth that work a hundred times over. And I couldn't comprehend how dramatic that trauma link was until I experienced it. And I'm sure you hear those stories from women all the time.

Brittany: Oh, 100%. I mean, if I could give this a new name, I would call it the Heal Your Life Program or like Change Your Life Program because, you know, we don't focus on the weight. The weight, just like you said, it's a side effect. Like, that's not even like what I'm passionate about. I love helping women free themselves and

become so much happier and whole and get back onto the path that they were meant to be on. Because what happens when you're struggling with, you know, extra weight is that you have, you know, poor self-esteem, you're saying nasty things to yourself. You, usually, you know, don't have great relationships or, you know, your relationship with your husband isn't that great. Or, you know, you're not dating and you're single or you're not going out. So there's all these areas of your life that are not feeling good, that are feeling unfulfilled.

So, it's not that...The funniest thing is that when we get to the end of the six-month program, it's not that everybody's at their goal weight because that's actually not the case. Usually, people will start to release weight after the six months is over. Everybody at the end of the program, they're like, "Oh my gosh, I am so much happier now. I'm so much freer now." A lot of them even say, "I don't even care if I lose the weight. I'm so happy. I am so grateful that I feel this good. I don't even care about the weight anymore." So, it's really, really cool. You know, kind of whatever the thing is that the women are struggling with is usually what, you know, they'll shift as well. So, you know, a lot of women will, you know, make more money or, like I said, have better relationships or feel happier. Maybe they've been struggling with depression or feeling anxious or maybe they'll be inspired to follow their passion instead of being in a corporate career, stuff like that we see happen a lot.

And it's just that part of it for me is so rewarding. Like I said, I mean, the weight loss is not the thing that motivates me. It's seeing all the change that happens and how much happier and empowered women are once they release all this stuff. It's basically like having, you know, a dirty trashcan in your brain that's, you know, affecting everything in your life. And when you take out the trash, it's like everything is clean, and new, and fresh. And, you know, you just have a new lease on life. You have a new outlook on life. And that's, you know, the best part for me.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely agree. Another question I love to ask at the end of interviews is if there's a book or a number of books that have had a dramatic impact on your life, and if so, what they are and why?

Brittany: Oh, I remember what book I said last time so I'm not gonna say that one, although that one was great. The other one I really liked was "An Inconvenient Truth About Relationships." So, I don't know, I've been exploring relationships for a while ever since I got divorced five years ago. And this book, it was written in such a different way that it really, really gave me a new outlook on relationships and really helped open my mind up to, you know, what's possible and helped me see also what I was struggling in with my marriage. It helped unlock a lot of the reasons that I was struggling. Oh, another person to follow, if, you know, anybody wants help with men, and dating, and relationships, which I know is not what we're talking about today. But all my girlfriends always ask me for dating advice, and I guess I'm quite good at it, is Allison Armstrong. She has so many great online audiobooks about understanding women, understanding men. Those have just been life-changing for me, not to just understand men but also to understand myself and the way that I operate just, you know, in a feminine way.

Katie: I love it. I will put links to those in the show notes as well. Brittany, thanks for being here and sharing again. I think this is something, like we talked about, that is bubbling up for a lot of people right now. Like you said, we are all facing things that kind of we've never had to face before. And the beauty of it is, with the right mindset, that's actually a wonderful opportunity to address a lot of these things. We're just being given a whole lot of these teachers this year. So I love that you're helping people find ways to work through and to learn from and to benefit from all of these stressors that we don't have any control over right now. So thank you for your work and for your time.

Brittany: Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for having me, Katie.

Katie: And thank you as always for 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."

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