



Episode 378: Q&A: Health on a Budget, Virtual
Schooling, Screen Time, Self Care, Eczema
& Giving Blood

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This podcast is sponsored by Alitura skincare. This a company founded by my friend (and previous podcast guest) Andy, who formulated these products to heal after a horrific accident left him with scars on his face. He mixed some of the most nutrient dense ingredients on the planet to create truly natural products that feed and benefit the skin, leaving it nourished and in my experience, hydrated and younger looking. I know from talking to Andy that he has literally gone all over the world to source some of these ingredients and is meticulous about testing them for quality and finding the combination that works the best. Even the name, Alitura, means feeding and nourishing in latin. My personal favorites are the mask and the gold serum, but all of their products are great. Here's a tip with the mask... mix with apple cider vinegar instead of water for an extra boost and to deep clean pores. I use the mask a few times a week and I use the gold serum at night and after sun exposure to keep my skin nourished and hydrated. Check out these and all of their products at alitanaturals.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. If you haven't tried it yet, it's wellness with an E on the end, my new line of personal care products, including natural, herbal-based hair care, and toothpaste, and now hand sanitizer. You can check it all out at wellnesse.com.

This episode is a single episode and a Q&A episode answering some of the more common questions I've gotten from you guys in recent emails and on social media, touching on some of the timely things going on right now, but also touching a lot on health on a budget. A lot of us have budgets tightening right now on virtual schooling and homeschooling, on things like screen time and self-care, going deep a little bit on the GAPS diet we used with my son for his eczema, and also answering in more depth about why I give blood regularly and all the considerations surrounding that. So a lot of topics. I think it'll be a fun episode. And thank you guys for submitting the questions and, of course, as always, for listening.

I'm gonna start with some reader-submitted questions. The first one being from Nancy, who asked, "I keep reading about cortisol stress and how it stops me from losing weight. Can you please discuss ways to combat this?" Absolutely. And this is something I have very direct first-hand experience with. If you have listened to my podcast episode about my relatively drastic weight loss...that's episode number 309. I'll make sure links in the show notes if you have not heard it. But this ended up being a tremendous key for me because, for over a decade, I was doing all of the things supposedly "correctly." I was eating very clean. I was eating the right macros for my body. I was eating in accordance...you know, avoiding things that caused an IgG reaction. I was moving. I was doing all the things you're supposed to do to lose weight, and it wasn't working at all. And also, certainly, I had some mitigating factors like Hashimoto's and, like, six pregnancies throughout the course of that, but I still wasn't able to lose weight.

And the stress and cortisol side ended up being a huge component for me, but not in the way I thought. I had done a lot to address the physical aspects of stress. So, things like light, and sleep, and food. But I was largely ignoring or thought I didn't need to deal with a lot of inner stress that was being caused from emotions that went back to several traumas in my past. And I didn't realize how drastically those were impacting my daily life until I started addressing them. And for me, this meant actually going down to the root, and addressing the trauma, and figuring out where those things were coming from, and figuring out how to let them go. Because what I found was, even though I was doing all of the supposed health things right, my body was pretty much always in a state of sympathetic nervous system. So even though I may not have felt stressed emotionally, at any given time, my body felt stressed. And being in sympathetic nervous system, I wasn't in a state that I could rest, and digest, and heal. I was in a fight or flight state because my body pretty much always thought there was danger.

And so, what I had to do was address the inner stuff to make my body and my mind realize it was safe. And then, from there, I was able to make drastic changes without feeling like I was fighting hard at all. So, when it comes to cortisol, and stress, and weight loss, there's a whole lot that can come into play here. And there are practitioners I recommend. The doctors at SteadyMD have been awesome for me, and I'll put a link in the show notes to them as well. They have some functional medicine doctors. There are lab tests, like, you can do for cortisol. There's one called the DUTCH test. You can also just get regular cortisol tests, but you need to

work with a practitioner who understands all of the puzzle pieces that can relate to that, because, like I said, stress is not just the feeling of stress. There can be physical stressors that are causing an actual cortisol issue in your body, like too much movement or too little, or a food tolerance, or too much food or too little food, or too much sleep or too little asleep, or there could be like, in my case, an emotional or mental stress, or there could be a combination of all of those things. So, figuring out the cortisol component is a relatively complex equation, but for me, it made a tremendous difference, and a difference to the point that I ended up actually now eating much more food, and weighing much less, and wanting to exercise and move because it's fun. It's not a thing I have to make myself do.

A couple of things that I have found that seemed to be relatively universally helpful...again, I still recommend working with a practitioner, especially to figure out specifics, like food intolerances. Like, hormone levels can really impact this. Like, a diet, like, making sure there's not a food intolerance, because if you're eating a food that's inflammatory for you, it's causing a stress, even if you don't feel it.

But once you've done all of those things, there seem to be some commonalities, like natural ways to support the body's natural hormone process, that helps get your cortisol in correct levels. Because, every day, there's a cascade of hormones, times when cortisol should be a little higher, and times when it should drop. And for people who are struggling with cortisol and stress issues, sometimes these can even be completely reversed or just a little bit out of whack. So you're gonna wanna work with someone who knows what they're doing on that. But I found things like light and food can be used, and breathwork can really be used to help manipulate those hormones and get them back into proper range.

So, a couple of things that were really, really useful for me along these lines was, I've mentioned it before, as soon as possible after waking up, getting outside, even if it's a cloudy day, you're being exposed to such a wider spectrum of light outdoors than you are indoors. And it doesn't work to look through a window. A window actually blocks some of those spectrum of light. So it's important to get actually outside. It can be on a porch. It can be covered, and it doesn't have to be if it's raining, standing in the rain, but it does need to be outside without glass between you and the sunlight. And that light hits specialized receptors in your eye that signal the body that it's morning time. And part of the theory of what can be going on with cortisol is that our bodies don't know when it's daytime and nighttime anymore because we're constantly exposed to a more narrow spectrum of light from screens and indoor light, and not enough sunlight. And that light can signal the body that it's daytime at night when it's not, and we're not getting the bright light in the morning and in the middle of the day that signal the body that it's morning or it's noontime. So, the cortisol can be out of whack because melatonin and all the other hormones that are light-dependent are also out of whack.

So that small change, just spending 30 minutes outside as soon as possible after waking up, many people have just a huge difference from that alone. And the best part is it doesn't cost a thing. It's not really much effort to do, not too difficult and easy to implement. In the same way, food can be manipulated to help get your hormones in range. So, food is another signal that we send to our body about what time of day it is. And typically, in most societies, especially past societies, the majority of eating happens during daylight hours because that's when you can see. So, that's another way, again, to signal the body of what time of day it is. And a couple of ways that I found that are especially helpful to do this, one is to get enough protein at the first

meal of the day. If you are doing any form of time-restricted eating or intermittent fasting, this may not be early, early in the morning, but getting enough protein can help that hormone cascade, just like the light can.

Dr. Alan Christianson, who was one of the doctors that was really instrumental in helping me recover from Hashimoto's, he recommends that if you're going to eat carbohydrates, and I actually think you really should, those are best eaten at the last meal of the day, so dinner or whatever the equivalent would be. And then Dr. Amy Shah, who's a previous podcast guest, talks about how you can use something called circadian fasting, in line with those other two suggestions, to make sure that your body's getting the correct signals about what time of day it is. And circadian fasting, simplified, it means you don't eat if the sun's not out. So you wait in the morning to eat until at least the sun has come up, you stop eating before the sun goes down. That part is more difficult, and ironically can lead to weight loss all by itself, because eating late at night can confuse the body signals.

So from a food perspective, what helped me with that mixture of circadian fasting was to eat a lot of protein, at least 40 grams for me at the first meal of the day, which, if I eat breakfast, that can be at 8:00 or 9:00. Sometimes that can be at lunch if I'm eating in a shorter window. And then if I'm going to eat carbs, often things like sweet potatoes, or squash, or fruit, or sometimes even sprouted grains of some kind, or something like that, that's usually in the evening because that helps that hormone cascade and tends to have a beneficial effect on sleep.

Another thing I recommend that is completely free, that I think is universally beneficial, is to avoid the mainstream or most news media completely. And I say this as someone whose business benefits from social media, also to avoid social media as much as possible. Especially right now, there are measurable data that those two things increase your stress levels, and it's quite easy to just turn them off. I don't have social media on my phone, so it's not a temptation to check it. And we don't ever, under any circumstances, turn on mainstream news in our house, period. I have a few sources I read to make sure I'm aware what's going on in the world. But I'm cautious and I limit that too. And here's why. Human beings, they say we're psychologically geared to be in small groups, and that our brain tends to max out from remembering and caring about somewhere between 150 and 200 people, depending on what source you're looking at. So it's very difficult for the human brain to remember and care about more people than that. And so, obviously, on social media, many of us have many more friends, and that we obviously know many more people than that, but that's kind of a social limitation of the human brain because that's sort of the size group you would normally potentially interact with in a way that was beneficial to your life.

Also, throughout history, you pretty much only had exposure and interaction with people relatively close to your geographic area. And if someone in your geographic area had a crisis, you knew about it, and you also had the ability to help them. And it was important that if someone in your area was in crisis, if you knew about it, your body would respond in a similar way because whatever happened to them could potentially be a threat to you.

So, the overused cliché example, if there's a lion who's going to attack your neighbor, it could potentially also be a threat for you. It's important for you to know about that, and be aware, and have a healthy fear. And that's part of our ingrained human response. The problem is, we're now globally connected to billions of people through social media. And through the news media, we are exposed to the threats, dangers, and crises all over the world, which our brains still haven't quite adjusted to. So our body and our nervous system can't necessarily distinguish between things that are an immediate threat to us, and things that are in a completely different continent and not necessarily a threat to us, because we're designed to empathize and mirror that human suffering. And so now we have drastically more inputs and are aware of all of these problems going on all over the world, but we don't actually have the ability to improve a lot of those problems. So it's like a feedback loop where we can't actually do anything to affect the outcome. And a lot of those things are not a direct threat to us, but our nervous system doesn't know that, and our subconscious doesn't necessarily know that. So we're essentially taking on the stress of the entire world, with no ability to make it better, in most cases.

I have heard from probably dozens of people at this point, who have completely cold turkey given up the news media and a lot of social media. And not a single one regrets it, nor has anyone missed out on something that was vitally important to them from not watching the news. It's basically kind of just a constant diet of junk food, as far as your body is concerned, in that it's messing with your cortisol. It's increasing fear and stress. And you watch it and you can't actually help those people directly, necessarily.

If helping the people is a concern, there are great sources of information that you can read in less time without the same emotion and signaling all of those fear responses, and that have very direct ways that you can send resources, or time, or money, or whatever it is to help people in various areas. So a little bit of a soapbox for me there. But I think getting rid of those inputs made a huge difference on my life, and I've heard the same story from many, many people. So, that would be my challenge to you today. If you feel like you have a lot of stress in your life, you can't get rid of a lot of stresses that come with life, especially if you're a mom. Kids will still wake up in the middle of the night. Things will still break around the house. There will still potentially be chaos, but you can avoid the exogenous chaos that you don't need, that you are choosing to watch that your body thinks is junk food, and that could be keeping your cortisol out of whack. And so again, off soapbox with that one, but it's a free change anyone can implement.

Another question in relation to this that I get quite a lot, every couple of months, I post a picture when I give blood. And I mentioned that it has benefits, depending on certain conditions, and that it can be really helpful for the donor as well as for the person receiving the blood. And I always receive a lot of follow-up questions about this. So I wanted to just touch on this as well. Personally, giving blood is especially beneficial for me because I have hemochromatosis. It's a health condition where I have excess iron in my body. It's apparently inherited. I have a genetic marker for it. But regular donation of blood helps reduce my iron levels. And this was something that didn't show up for me until after I stopped having kids, and I'm guessing because there was more blood loss that came with that, and babies in utero tend to use, I would guess, iron as well. But that's been a benefit to me that is not universal, but is one of the reasons I give blood. So my iron tends to run high, even if I don't eat a lot of red meat.

A lot of people asked, "If I'm anemic, should I still give blood?" And definitely not. Like everything in health, this is a very personalized thing. You should ideally be working with some kind of practitioner or functional medicine doctor, especially if you have any kind of condition, like anemia or anything else. But if you have low iron, that would be a good indication not to give blood. But for those of us who do not have low iron, there are actually some benefits to giving blood beyond just the iron thing. So there's some preliminary data that there's a correlation between donating blood regularly and lower risk of certain cancers. And the theory is that by donating blood and reducing the iron stores in the body, we're reducing a cancer risk. There's some cancers that seem to thrive in a more iron-rich environment. So there's potential anti-cancer benefits there. There's also potential heart and liver effects. Again, there's only preliminary research on these. I don't think there's a ton of incentive to study this, because even though I'm sure that there is money made in blood donation, I don't think it's a tremendous amount.

But again, the iron overload can lead to heart and liver, potentially, issues, as well. So, excess iron, they say, can get stored in the heart, liver, and pancreas. And that might increase the risk of cirrhosis of liver, or liver failure, or damage to the pancreas, or potentially even heart abnormalities, like irregular heart rhythms. So blood donation by helping maintain healthy iron levels might help reduce the risk of some of those problems.

It's not a benefit I would encourage people to donate blood for, but there is often a weight loss effect from donating blood, not just immediately as you lose a couple of pounds, usually, of actual fluid from the blood they take out of you, but when you donate blood, your body has to regenerate it, and you burn quite a bit of calories from regenerating that blood. Again, that's not a complete weight loss strategy. It shouldn't be used on its own. But it's this positive effect for people who are able to give blood. A cool thing that happens when you give blood is that it stimulates new blood cell production logically. But as the body works to replenish blood loss, this increases the production of new blood cells, which are beneficial to the body in various ways. So, I don't think it's in any way a magic bullet. But since it can very much save someone else's life, and there's potential health benefits to donors as well, if you have some of those health factors in your favor, it's something definitely to consider doing.

I've received messages from quite a few listeners who had children born with various conditions that require them to have blood transfusions very regularly for their first couple years of life to survive, and I love hearing about stuff like that, and I hope when I donate blood, that it can help people, whatever their case may be, but help them to make it through whatever that is. On the flip side, when someone is anemic, again, probably not a good time to give blood. In the past, when I was anemic during a couple of pregnancies, I focused on natural sources of iron, like grass-fed liver or liver capsules and also food sources of vitamin C. This is an often-overlooked point. Vitamin C increases the absorption of iron. So I actually personally avoid vitamin C around any sources of iron because I don't need to increase my iron absorption. But for someone who's anemic, a food-based vitamin C or taking vitamin C around taking sources of natural iron can help the iron levels to regulate. So just a couple tips there, coolest thing about giving blood is you might save someone's life, and it might benefit you as well.

Melissa asks, "I'm reacting badly to collagen or bone broth or both. Any idea why?" And I think there's a potential couple of reasons here. And I'll go them into a little bit. Basically, first, it could be a glutamate thing,

and it could also be a histamine thing, or it could potentially be both. And without being too long-winded, I'll kind of try to explain. There's also some other periphery things related to bone broth we can talk about later. I don't think it's as cut and dry as in any way bone broth is good, bone broth is bad. I think there can be many benefits from bone broth, and it's something I consume relatively regularly. But there are, of course, caveats, as there are with anything.

So, there are various forms of glutamate. Some of them are found in bone broth. Excess free glutamate in the body can cause problems in some people. So, exposure to high levels of free glutamate can cause them to reach the bloodstream too quickly. And that can over-excite neurons in the brain, potentially causing things like insomnia, migraines, restlessness, irritability, anxiety, etc. That said, other research shows that forms of glutamate can help these things. So it's not extremely cut and dry. But there's a lot of evidence suggesting you don't want high glutamate levels in the body or the brain. Some people also have something called glutamate sensitivity. And they'll have certain reactions to foods, like bone broth, that have a lot of glutamate. This is not at all across the board, but some people do react well. And how this relates to bone broth. When it comes to certain bone broths, the concern is that certain bone broth can have high levels of free glutamate. And basically, I've heard that cooking bones for long periods of time breaks down naturally occurring amino acids and then increases the concentration of free glutamate.

A form of glutamate you're probably familiar with is monosodium glutamate, also called MSG, which is an unbound glutamate source. Some theories say that bone broth cooked beyond a certain amount of time is high in this other form of unbound glutamate, free glutamate, and that it can cause some of the same problems. Some people say, even, like, adding an acid like vinegar or lemon juice to broth can increase this production of glutamate. I don't think that the data is actually completely an honest one. Where they've actually looked at it... Well, I'll give you some number examples. So The Paleo Mom has a great article on that. And she says, "First analysis of amino acid content of broth found that 8 ounces of broth contained 1,013 milligrams of glutamic acid." And if that sounds like a lot, it's actually a lot less than other foods. For example, salmon contains about 12,000 times as much. One roasted chicken breast contains almost as much. A lobster contains five times as much, etc. So someone who doesn't react to those foods but might react to bone broth, it's probably not a glutamine thing.

We also don't actually know for sure, based on the studies, that acid or, like, a vinegar, actually does raise the glutamate in food. My take on this is, at the end of the day, like everything, we are all responsible for being our primary healthcare providers and figuring out what works for us. And some people do not seem to do well with bone broth. Some people have life-changing improvement from bone broth. Bone broth does contain proline and glycine, and some beneficial amino acids that are great for skin and joints. Everything in moderation, I don't think it should be the only food you consume. I don't think the data points directly to the idea that bone broth can be harmful because of the glutamate. But I think anybody who doesn't do well with bone broth should steer clear of it until they figure out why.

I also think that histamine could be the other reaction. And we don't know as much about this either. But there is a theory that histamine in bone broth can cause a problem for some people. And bone broth is a high-histamine food. So for people who are histamine intolerant or some people who have SIBO, which is small

intestinal bacterial overgrowth, can tend to react to bone broth more negatively. At the end of the day, my take is, if you react to a food, you should probably avoid that food, at least until you can figure out what in the body is causing the reaction to that food and address it.

I love this question from Kendra. "For people on a strict budget, aka can't afford to spend hundreds of dollars a month on all the organic foods and supplements, what are some important yet basic and inexpensive things that we can do for ourselves and our kids? I'm looking for what we should focus most on with supplements, i.e., vitamin C, probiotics, etc., for maintaining good health. I know food is important and we eat healthy already. I'm wondering if we should be taking other supplements, mostly." And I love this question. I think this is often overlooked. And even if people are not on a tight budget, these same exact statements apply, and I think this is where we need to start. It's easy to get sucked into all the glamorous new things, and new supplements, and fancy marketing, and biohacking devices, and certainly, those all can have their place. But the basics of health are often much less complicated, much less expensive, or entirely free. And I am even more convinced now than I ever have been, if you don't figure out these foundational blocks first, especially the personalized aspects of these for yourself, all of those fancy supplements and biohacking devices are not gonna be as effective anyway.

So let's start with some of the most important basics. I already mentioned it a little bit, this is a completely free thing to do, the light in the morning thing or just using light to your advantage. People underestimate this because you may not notice an immediate effect from manipulating your light, like you would from, for instance, eating a food that doesn't agree with you or taking a supplement that gives you immediate energy. But over the long-term, light is one of the most important things you can control for your health. So, my two biggest pieces of advice related to this, they don't necessarily have to cost anything, are, like I said, to get outside in the morning as soon as possible, and spend at least 30 minutes getting outdoor light. I also recommend on that same note, getting other forms of light exposure during the day. And the most recent podcast I did with Ari Whitten explains all of the scientific reasons, or a lot of the scientific reasons, this is so important. But, basically, sunlight is a nutrient to the body. And while we shouldn't sunburn, we are often mal-illuminated. We're not getting enough sunlight. Just getting enough sunlight can drastically improve health and not just for the vitamin D. So, if you aren't familiar, or you're still nervous about the sun, go check out that episode.

The flip side of this is that if we avoid light that we shouldn't be exposed to after sunset, that also can make a big difference on health. And there's simple ways to do this. The easiest way is to turn off or down lights in the house after dark. Avoid screens at night, I know that one's a little tougher, or at least use things like f.lux that change the spectrum so you're not getting as much blue light. There are also orange and red glasses that block blue light that can be used at night if you are gonna be doing some of those things. But, again, like I said, this is a completely free thing, unless you choose to buy orange or red glasses, that can make a big difference.

A simple tip that I have is that we have no blue light bulbs in certain lamps in our house. So, after dark, we can turn those on and still be able to see around the house, but not be exposed to blue light. Another completely inexpensive thing we can do, often totally free, is to get some kind of movement during the day. And as a tie-in to the first point, bonus points if you do this outside and get sunlight at the same time. Another recent

podcast guest, Shawn Wells, recommended getting some form of gentle movement after eating as a benefit for blood sugar control. And this can be as simple as a walk. It can be as simple as some gentle, like, movement, stretching, any kind of circuit outside. But movement can be free. We can do it at home. We can do it in our backyard. We can do it on a walk. That is a completely inexpensive or free thing we can do that there are well-documented benefits of movement. I'm not gonna call it exercise, because I think play and gentle movement can be just as effective or more effective, but it's something we all need to do.

Another tip I already mentioned, which is to reiterate, is circadian fasting, or circadian eating, I guess it would be more aptly called, which is just as simple as eat when it's daylight. This is something that we can do with our kids as well. They also don't need to be eating late at night. And that alone can help because your body has more time to rest and digest at night, and you can get deeper sleep from that, a lot of benefits to that. So protein in the morning and circadian fasting can really help. And since you have to eat anyway, this is not necessarily any more expensive. It also segues into what I think is a tremendously important part of health, which is the sleep component. And certainly, there are things that can improve sleep that do cost money. Like for me, one of the biggest needle movers was the chiliPAD, which helps my bed stay cool. And I noticed a big difference in my deep sleep from using that.

But there's also inexpensive things or free things we can do to improve sleep, things like avoiding caffeine afternoon, making sure we're staying hydrated but not drinking too much water in those couple of hours before bed, not eating for at least three hours before bed. And then a couple of other tricks I have found helpful, laying with the feet up against the wall so the legs are straight up in the air for a little while before bed can help the hormone cascade that's necessary for sleep. And then I often fall asleep doing what was recommended by another previous podcast guest, Dr. Andrew Weil, the 4-7-8 breathing, which is when you inhale for a count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 7, and then very slowly exhale to a count of 8.

Let's see, like I said a little bit already in this, I would address food first before supplements. So if budget's tight, I would concentrate on getting really nutrient-rich food before adding in any supplements. You really can't out-supplement a poor diet. So we focus on lots of really high-quality protein sources. And that's where I'm willing to allocate the majority of our budget, and then fill in with organic vegetables and other sources of nutrients and calories. Organic frozen vegetables are a great option. Those are often a lot more budget-friendly. And only after getting the diet dialed in, when I do supplements, to Kendra's point, I don't take anything every single day. I very often take things like probiotics, vitamin K-2-7, and vitamin C, but I also rotate a whole bunch of others. And I can put those links in the show notes if you guys are curious. But I don't wanna go deep on those because, again, these are very, very personalized, and I think we all each need to figure out what's gonna work best for us.

Another thing when it comes to health on a budget is avoiding the sources of stress that you don't have to encounter. Back to the point about social media and news. We don't actually have a biological need for those. They're easy to eliminate, you'll save time, and you'll save stress. So I would definitely start with those. To circle back to the outside thing, for one more reason why we should be spending more time outside, not just the sunlight, and the natural light, and the movement, and all that goes along with that, but there are some studies that, because we're at a constant temperature all the time, like, our bodies adapt to that and we're not

as healthy as we could be. So, basically, we're temperature thermo adapted. We're not being exposed to hot or cold temperatures. And, of course, we can do things like sauna and cold plunge to expose ourselves to more extreme temperatures, but, depending on where we live, we can also just go outside. And that's the inexpensive or free way. And you get all the other benefits as well.

I would say it's important to address all of those things. And then, and only then, start experimenting with things like probiotics, zinc, selenium, for me, certain B vitamins. If you wanna get really detailed beyond that, I found Nutrition Genome very helpful, which is a genetic test that spits out personalized diet and supplement recommendations so that you can actually take supplements that are most effective for you and not just take supplements that are gonna make your urine expensive.

Another reader question. "How do you handle screen time with kids?" And I'm only gonna touch on this briefly. I will do a more in-depth podcast soon about a lot of our aspects of school, and virtual school, and screen time. But I will say this, I think this has changed a lot for a lot of people this year because of more virtual options. For school and everything else that's going on, kids are necessarily on screens more than they used to be. And, certainly, screens can be used for school, but I don't think they have to be used as much as we are using them. I'm gonna touch on this in the next couple of questions a little bit with homeschooling and virtual schooling, but I think it's also important to realize that it's very likely that screens are always going to be part of our kids' lives. And even as adults, they're likely going to interact with screens a lot.

If we are being honest, as adults, all of us probably interact with our screens quite a bit. I'm cautious to not create a scenario where screens become the forbidden, that is then more enticing, that makes my kids want them strictly because they can't have them. I do the same thing with food. I don't want any food, even junk food to become enticing strictly because they feel like they can't have it. So in that sense, I like to think of screens kind of like food. They're objectively not good or bad, but the type and the quantity makes a difference. Just like with food, I don't wanna control this narrative with my kids. But I want to educate them, and guide them, and help them make good choices. Because this is gonna be something they have to encounter their whole lives. And me controlling the narrative for them while they're young and then just throwing them out into the world, where they have unlimited access to screens, or junk food, or whatever it may be, it's probably not the best-case scenario, either. So that's that.

We are not anti-screen at all. We watch family movies sometimes. The kids research often, even on their computers. When they're interested in a subject, I encourage them to spend time learning about it, to, even if they're on a computer, reading or watching TED Talks, or YouTube videos, whatever it may be. But we do try to encourage them and be an example, which, admittedly, I can be a much better example of about not being on our screens at night because of the points I've already mentioned about the light, and blue light at night, and how that can interfere with sleep.

And then we talk about screens being a tool and how there's incredible access to information. I mean, surely, we have access to all the information in the world, more than 10 times what was in the Library of Alexandria. We have incredible wealth of information at our fingertips. But just as if we had an incredible amount of food

at our fingertips, discretion can be very important. So we're helping have those conversations with kids, educating them to make good choices, but not forbidding them when it comes to screens, but guiding them. That said, they only use screens in common areas. And we do some common sense things, like just make sure they're not ending up on websites that definitely could be harmful or that they're definitely not ready for. But I'm probably much less strict about screens than people might expect.

It also ties into homeschooling. And I had a lot of similar questions. I'm gonna read a couple that kind of sum up a lot of the ones that were asked. And, like I said, I've done a podcast on this recently. I'll link that in the show notes if you're listening at wellnessmama.fm. And I'm going to be doing more about this soon. And I'll share some details about that in a minute. But Anita says, "I'm exploring homeschooling, and it's super intimidating. Honestly, I don't even know where one starts. All I understand is that you have to examine what you wanna do with each child and then pick a curriculum. But how do you ask the right questions or even know why you're doing it in the first place? How do you pick what you teach? Is there an online homeschool community, help desk, or live instructor option? Does that even exist? The logistics are super fuzzy, and I need someone to hold my hand."

Similarly, Brittany says, "My question for you is, I'd love for you to share how you chose your homeschool curriculum. How do you choose based on your children's individual needs? And how do you navigate the current pandemic and situation with your children, especially from the natural side of things?" So I'm gonna give some broad stuff, and, like I said, I will cover more of this in a follow-up episode soon.

But I would encourage anyone thinking of homeschooling or even anyone virtually schooling, to think about it differently. When our oldest was school age, we sat down and thought, "What is gonna best prepare him for being a successful adult? And what does that even...? What do we define as a successful adult?" For us, this meant someone who was kind, who helped solve problems in the world, who was financially able to support themselves and/or a family if they have one, and things like that. And we realized that, in an increasingly technological world, none of the options available seemed to best do that. In other words, either homeschooling or sending him to school didn't seem like the best option. Because both of those homeschool curriculums being largely based on school curriculums seemed to prepare him for an adulthood that was largely obsolete. And so, we tried to start at the beginning and asked the question, "Then what does he actually need to be successful in life? And how do we give him that?" And we settled on things like he needs to maintain the inherent creativity that he already has. He needs to know how to ask good questions and think critically. He needs to know how to evaluate an information source, and know if it's a good source of information or not, especially considering we don't have a limit on information or knowledge. In fact, we have so much of it. We need to learn to be discerning. He needs to have a growth mindset, and view challenges and failures as learning opportunities rather than roadblocks, things like that.

And when we evaluated that way, we realized we didn't need any of the existing curriculums. We needed to teach the basics that would make him socially literate and literate in the basic skills he would need. But we didn't need to just throw all of the knowledge at him that was defined in the system that was necessary to keep kids occupied in school for eight hours a day. Because in homeschooling, we don't have those limitations.

So in that sense, I don't feel like, in general, you need a set curriculum or that anything necessarily has to be taught at a certain age in a certain way.

There's some great free resources like Khan Academy, that have the basics if you wanna follow those. But I think it's extremely important, and quite a few past podcast guests would agree, it's very important to build in lots of time for creativity, for outdoor play, for reading, and to let them be bored. Because that's part of maintaining that natural creativity is in boredom and letting them think through ways to not be bored, instead of just us fulfilling that for them all the time.

So my encouragement to parents, especially if you're new to homeschooling or virtual schooling, is that the great news is you probably have to do much less than you think you have to do. It can probably be done in under a couple of hours a day. And you can then send your kids out to do creative activities or play outside, which is also going to be incredibly beneficial for them, and for their creativity, and for their limbic and vestibular development. So if you're stressed, you're likely trying to do too much, especially if you're just starting off. And for all the challenges that have come with this year, the silver lining is, it's kind of given us all a little bit of a reset and a little bit more grace than we would normally get. So don't be too tough on yourself. And that said, I'm also working on the final touches of turning the system...I hate to call it a curriculum, because it's not that, but the system I use with my own kids that helps them to become entrepreneurial problem-solvers who maintain their creativity. And I'm gonna be working on having that in a format that I can give it to you guys soon to use with your families. So definitely stay tuned for that. And to anyone new to homeschooling or virtual schooling, hang in there, you're probably doing an incredible job, and your kids are probably grateful just to have you. Let them be bored and let them have fun.

Today's episode is brought to you by Athletic Greens, the all-in-one daily drink to support better health and peak performance. Even with a balanced diet, it can be difficult to cover all of your nutritional bases and this is where Athletic Greens can help. Their daily drink is essentially nutritional insurance for your body and it's delivered straight to your door every month. It's developed from a complex blend of 75 minerals, vitamins, and whole-food ingredients. It's a greens powder that's engineered to fill the nutritional gaps in your diet. Their daily drink improves your everyday performance by addressing the four pillars of health, energy, recovery, gut health, and immune support. It's packed with adaptogens for recovery, probiotics and digestive enzymes for gut health, and vitamin C and zinc for immune support. It's basically an all-in-one solution to help your body meet its nutritional needs. And it's highly absorbable and diet-friendly, whether you are keto, vegan, paleo, dairy-free, gluten-free, etc. It has less than one gram of sugar and it tastes great. And here's how I used it and still use it. When I started losing weight, I was eating a lot more protein, and it became hard to get enough greens and vegetables in because it was hard to actually eat enough volume of food. I was full. So I was able to use Athletic Greens to meet my veggie and nutritional needs, even if I was full and just didn't feel like eating extra. It's basically like a multivitamin, but it's actually head and shoulders above a lot of multivitamins. They don't use any GMOs or harmful chemicals. And it's NSF certified. So they really are careful about their sourcing and what goes into it. When you try Athletic Greens through my podcast, they're also gonna send you a year supply of their vitamin D3 and K2 for free. I've talked about vitamin D before. We know we get it from the sun, but it can also be important to supplement, especially in the winter months. And this is something I test my own blood levels of and supplement when necessary. And it combines these nutrients to help support the heart, immune system, and respiratory system, which is especially helpful at this time of

year. So whether you're looking to boost energy levels, support your immune system, or address gut health, it's a great time to try Athletic Greens for yourself. Simply visit athleticgreens.com/wellnessmama to claim my special offer today. You'll get a free vitamin D3K2 wellness bundle with your first purchase. That's up to a one year supply of vitamin D as an added value for free when you try Athletic Greens. You'd be hard-pressed to find a more comprehensive nutritional bundle anywhere else.

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.

Donna asks, "How do you fit in taking care of yourself on a busy day or week? My eating healthfully and getting exercise, as well as my personal goals, are often casualties of my long list of urgent or important needs for the rest of my family." And I first wanna say, I can absolutely empathize. I have been there too. And I know exactly how tough that feels. In fact, this was something that, for me, took a lot of years to figure out and almost led to a nervous breakdown, in the meantime. And I don't say that lightly. I came extremely close to completely deleting Wellness Mama and just focusing on my family because I wasn't able to balance it all. And that process, like I said, was a long and slow one for me. But now, after years of working on this and systematizing has become an effortless one for me. And I'm wrapping up a book on this that will hopefully be coming soon. The short version is that I realized I was running my business with systems, and goals, and measurable objectives. And I wasn't doing that at home, which was a huge disservice to my family.

I started applying a lot of the same things that I had learned that made a business successful and adapted them to run my family in a similar way. And, despite how it sounds, it is not at all overly structured or rigid. In fact, it's given us much more freedom. And I am gonna be sharing that whole system with you guys soon. The short version is, if you start by figuring out the biggest sources of your stress and time constraints, especially the recurring ones, and then solve for those variables, you can slowly dig yourself out of that hole.

Also, it's important to get everyone else involved. Our rest of our family are often much more capable than we give them credit for. And, often, speaking for myself, largely, we take on more than we need to. So again, I'm gonna go into all of those details in the book soon. But an easy way to start this is to do the 80/20. Write out the 20% of things that are causing you most of your stress, and then figure out how to get rid of those. Figure out the 20% of things that actually give you, personally, the most happiness and solve for those. And, in some ways, 2020 has been great for this because many of us have had to drastically reevaluate our lives and what

day-to-day living looks like. And so as we now try to integrate and move forward from this, it's a great time to consciously implement some of those changes.

I will tackle one more question as we're getting a little bit close to the end of time, and I want to go drink coffee soon. Natasha says, "I've read your previous blogs on the GAPS diet and how you used it to heal your younger child's eczema. I was hoping you could elaborate more on how you approach this diet for a child at such a young age. My 20-month-old has horrible eczema, and I'm willing to do anything, but the introduction portion of the GAPS is not feasible. Did you skip this with your child? Can you make any food or meal recommendations for toddlers on GAPS?" And Barbara asked, "Do any of your children struggle with eczema, or food intolerance, or allergies?" And, like Natasha said, I do have a post on this that I will link in the show notes. If you're not familiar with the idea, that I would also highly encourage reading the book "Gut and Psychology Syndrome." But there are reports that this type of a diet can help with things like ADD, ADHD, depression, schizophrenia, food allergies, eczema, etc. It also can be a little bit confusing and a lot daunting if you are not used to it. There's basically two parts, the intro portion, and the full-on GAPS diet.

In the intro, there are stages with only slow-cooked, things like meats, vegetables, meat stock, probiotic foods, like sauerkraut, etc. And then, at each stage, you get to add in more foods and gauge reaction. And then once you've progressed through that, you are in the full GAPS diet, which also includes things like grain-free flours, cultured dairy, and fruit. Usually, people follow the intro for six months and then the full diet for a couple of years. We did do the intro diet with our son. We actually did it as a family. The theory behind this is that this type of diet gives the gut a break, reduces inflammation, and gives the body time to heal. And so, by doing so, it can help with food allergies and intolerances, with behavioral issues, with skin disorders, like eczema, which is what he was experiencing, and even potentially with autoimmune conditions. So, we did do this with him, even the intro. It was extremely difficult. It was also extremely effective. He doesn't anymore... My son does not have any food allergies or intolerances, and nor does he have eczema.

I think there are parts of the GAPS diet that can be really beneficial for anyone, but I also definitely understand how big of a job it is to take it on. And it does require complete compliance. Part of the reason it works is that it addresses, like, gut issues like leaky gut and gut dysbiosis. I will say something I did not know early on that certain strains of probiotics could be helpful. And, in hindsight, I wonder if this would have drastically shortened our time on the GAPS diet. And we now use Just Thrive Probiotics all the time for all the kids. And that's been a huge game-changer for us. One of my daughters started exhibiting signs of potentially an egg intolerance, and the probiotics and another product called IgG from Just Thrive, those were able to turn it around entirely for her. So I think that might have actually drastically shortened our time.

I also think that there can be modified approaches, and, especially for young kids, some kind of hybrid, not full intro diet, but hybrid that just keeps inflammatory foods low can be really helpful as well. I've also heard of parents having success with something more similar to, like, the virgin diet, for instance, which just eliminates the most common allergen triggers or other forms of elimination diets that are not quite as restrictive, and then using that to gauge food response. So, in hindsight, I'd probably try those before I went into the GAPS intro again, and also try regular probiotics, and a lot of them in the short-term. I hear from a lot of parents

that foods like dairy and eggs can be really big triggers for things like eczema, so I would definitely start with those.

That's it. There are still a lot more questions. I think we'll have to do more Q&A episodes if you guys like that. Please let me know. Also, feel free to always, of course, send in your questions or leave a comment on this post with your questions. I hope that answers like this are helpful. And I'm always curious what questions you have, and if I can address them in a future episode.

I also just wanna say...since so many of these questions relate to stress and all of the things going on that are causing stress right now, I just wanna say thank you guys for being part of the community, for caring so much about your families, and about their health, and about all these problems, and being part of the changes that are gonna help solve so much of this, and just offer encouragement, in case nobody's told you today, that you are awesome, and you are enough. And I'm so grateful that you shared your most valuable time, your resource with me. I know that I say that at every podcast, but I mean it 100%. Our time is so, so valuable, and it's truly, truly an honor that you shared yours with me today. I'm so grateful that you were here. I'm so grateful that you're part of the community, 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.