



Episode 379: Why Your Home Isn't As Non-Toxic
As You Think (& How to Fix It)
With Kelly Love of Branch Basics

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals. Beekeeper's is on a mission to reinvent your medicine cabinet with clean remedies that actually work. I am a huge fan of these bee powered products and want to share about one of my favorites. It's called B-powered and it's a superfood honey that goes beyond all the amazing benefits of raw honey. My kids love this as a superpowered treat in the morning with yogurt and chia seeds and I love it for its many benefits. I'll often grab a spoonful for a healthy energy boost when I need it during the day. But it is so much more than just that. I would say it's probably the most powerful honey on the planet and that's because this isn't just any honey. It's a therapeutic blend of propolis, royal jelly and bee pollen supports all day energy and immune function. Essentially, it's a natural energy supplement that won't have you crashing later in the day and I find sprinkling a little of sea salt on it makes it taste amazing and also gives an extra benefit with the electrolytes. It tastes delicious and you can add it into drinks or over foods like yogurt, toast, and smoothies. It contains raw honey which is an easily digestible natural fuel and also bee pollen which is nature's multivitamin and it contains free-forming amino acids and nutrients and is a denser protein source than animal protein (gram-for-gram). It's been researched and used by Olympians to improve endurance and overall performance. Propolis contains antioxidants and germ-fighting compounds, which work together to support immune health. And royal jelly is the food of the queen of the hive and contains the neurotransmitter acetylcholine and ultra unique fatty acids that promote mental clarity, brain health & focus. B. Powered is your all-day energy support. I also recommend trying their propolis throat spray for defense at the first sign of a scratchy throat or sniffles and their B.LXR for a caffeine free energy boost that lasts all day. To upgrade your medicine cabinet and save 15% on your first order, go to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama to get 15% off.

This episode is brought to you by Gladskin, an incredible new product and resource for anyone who is struggling with eczema. This product is rooted in a really unique scientific understanding of the skin's microbiome. Gladskin has unearthed an innovative new way to solve eczema that helps to treat the root and not just the symptom. It's a new category of non-prescription eczema treatment rooted in endolysin science and has received recognition from today's leading dermatologists and pediatricians. While most microbiome studies have focused on the health implications of what's found deep in the gut we're now finding that healthy skin, just like a healthy gut, requires a balance of bacteria. In fact, four out of five people with eczema have a specific type of imbalance in their skin bacteria or their skin microbiome. And this is where Gladskin comes in. When the skin balance bacteria gets out of balance, eczema is more likely to flare. So a targeted approach to that takes into account the microbiome's good and bad bacteria is critical to relieving the redness and itching of eczema. Although new and unique in its approach in the U.S., this has already been a proven solution for eczema in Europe for five years and received recognition from leading dermatologists and pediatricians. It's also been accepted by the National Eczema Association and is a different approach altogether compared to steroid creams and traditional over the counter moisturizers. The best part of Gladskin is hypoallergenic and free of steroids, fragrances, drying alcohols, and harmful preservatives. It's stored fresh in a pharmaceutical quality bottle so they don't need to use the chemical preservatives found in most over the counter creams and lotions. I hear from a lot of you whose children have eczema, and I'm so excited to get to share this resource. You can find out more and get an automatic 10% discount by going to wellnessmama.com/go/gladskin. To get a 10% discount, it should be automatic, but you can also use the code `WellnessMama10` if you have any trouble.

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. It's my new line of completely safe and non-toxic, and natural personal care products, like hair care, toothpaste, and hand sanitizer.

And speaking of non-toxic, this episode is all about why your home probably isn't as non-toxic as you think it is, and some easy steps to fix that. I'm here with Kelly Love, who is one of the cofounders of Branch Basics. It's a company that makes safe and effective cleaning products and that also does a lot of education about healthy living. I've had one of the other co-founders, Marilee, on before as well to share some related tips. But I really wanted to have Kelly on to go deep on a few topics. She was raised in a home with all things conventional, and she made this transition in college when she saw firsthand how it made a difference in her own life and in her best friend's life and that was the impetus for founding Branch Basics. And in this episode, we go deep on how even if you aren't using certain products, just having them in your house can make a really drastic difference on your indoor air quality and the toxin level in your home, what it means when something is unscented versus fragrance-free, what the biggest offenders are when it comes to problems in the home, and so much more. It was a really fascinating, practical episode. I think you can pull a lot of easy tips. And I also share a couple of my favorite resources, including Branch Basics, which there's a discount code in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm for it, which is a cleaning concentrate that replaces literally every cleaning product in your house. And so, not only are you switching to a completely non-toxic solution, but you're saving money as well. And we walk through a lot of those specifics in this episode. So with that, let's join Kelly. Kelly, welcome to the podcast.

Kelly: Hi, thank you so much for having me.

Katie: I'm so excited to chat with you today because I love our conversations in-person when you visit and also every time we chat, and I'm excited that we get to share this one with everybody listening. And for people who are not familiar with you yet, I'd love if you could start by explaining a little bit of your background and how you became a co-founder of one of my favorite companies, which is called Branch Basics.

Kelly: Of course, yeah. Okay. So, Katie, you always have these, like, experts on and I'm like, "Oh my goodness, I'm just, like, a mom that's really passionate about health and helping people use safe products." So, hopefully, I will bring just a relatability factor for a lot of your listeners. Because really, I just have experienced the power of living in a clean, pure, non-toxic environment and eating clean food without harmful chemicals, and what that's done for my health, and my best friend, and her aunt, who are my two co-founders of Branch Basics. So, at Branch Basics, we sell cleaning products, but really, we are all about education. And our cleaning products are really just a Trojan horse to kind of get people to start thinking about what they're bringing in their homes and what's actually inside the bottles of the things they're using in and on and around themselves and, you know, thinking about how to create a healthy home. And so quickly, I'll just give a little background. Allison and I met in college. She went from being a normal, healthy girl to all of a sudden getting really sick. Doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong for over two years, She traveled the country seeing different top specialists, had an ever-growing list of treatments, and drugs, and you name it, and just wasn't getting better. And then finally, kind of was at desperate rock bottom, and had ears to hear her Aunt Marilee. And so, she

started talking with Marilee, and Marilee started asking questions, like, "What are you eating every day? What products are you using for laundry, personal care products, toothpaste? You know, what pesticides do you have in your house? Do you use candles?"

All these things that Allison was like, "What? What does this have to do with my health?" And anyway, after six months of changing her diet and removing all of the dryer sheets, candles, you name it, all the harmful products, she finally started feeling better, and getting relief, and seeing changes in her health. And we just were so blown away and fascinated by this. That was how things remained at the time, that we decided to ask Marilee if we could live with her for a summer in hot Texas, beautiful out there, and we just wanted to learn from her and have, like, a clean, healthy detox summer right out of college. And so, we had our minds completely open to just the fact that our everyday exposures are connected to our health and how we feel in the immediate, you know, short-term, but also long-term impact. And I was the healthy one. I was like, "Oh yeah, I'm just going to, like, learn about all this. I'm healthy and I just wanna be healthier or, you know, learn. And I actually had my eyes open to the fact that all these things that we accept as normal, like, sorry, painful period cramps, or dry itchy eyes, or headaches, muscle aches, etc., really are just considered normal because they're so common, but they don't have to be that way. Like, our bodies don't have to even have, like, body odor. I was like, "Oh my goodness, this is crazy. I don't even smell anymore." So, it was just really cool to have the experience to live in an environment that was actually pure. Marilee had a home free of harmful pesticides, and cleaning products, and fragrances and, you know, all the things, and we ate a pure organic diet free of chemical additive and harmful chemicals and foods. So, all that to say, Allison completely recovered. I felt better than ever and we were just on fire for wanting to spread this message that Marilee had been consulting and sharing with people, helping people around the country for decades.

I kind of skipped over that. But Marilee actually knew all of this information because of her son who was chemically injured at the age of 10 by a large exposure to now-banned pesticides. And he went from being a coordinated, athletic, intelligent little boy to not being able to walk a straight line or spell a three-letter word and was just a complete emotional wreck, highs and lows and, you know, thought you would be screaming even if you're whispering, etc. And the doctor said he would never recover and be a bubble boy for the rest of his life because his detoxification and immune system was so damaged and his brain was so damaged. And back then, they didn't think that the brain could regenerate. And so, Marilee just refused to believe that and kept trying to do everything she could to help him get better. But basically, they had to sleep outside. He was so unable to detoxify even everyday chemicals, like our bodies can do amazingly. And she discovered or realized that she thought she had cleaned up the house and made it completely free of all these things that would set him off, and one night realized that there was this box of her favorite perfumes, and nail polishes, and things that she thought he could handle being around whenever he got better. And she was just holding on to and they were in a box in the closet, no big deal. Well, she had a thought one night, just couldn't figure out why he's still not able to be in the house after cleaning it up so much. And thought of that box and removed it, and kind of thought of it as, like, an experiment, and didn't tell him or her husband. And the next day was the first time he was finally able to stay in the house, and then ended up sleeping inside the house, and not having to sleep outside.

And so, it was a pretty incredible revelation. That was the true turning point for her son's health and ultimately what led to him completely healing and her going on to consult hundreds, thousands of others, just

based on this simple, common sense, you know, practice of removing harmful chemicals or products with harmful chemicals from our homes and harmful foods from our diet. So, all that to say, we ended up starting Branch Basics as a way to get this message out. But also, we started with cleaning products because it was an easy first step for people. We found that it's really overwhelming to think about, you know, switching your lifestyle, and your habits, and your products. But cleaning is an easy first step that makes a huge impact. And, you know, we wanted to make it really easy for people to replace other cleaning products. So we have a concentrate model that replaces all, you know, dozens of different cleaning products so it can be used for all the cleaning needs around your home. It makes it really easy so you don't have to research a new oven cleaner, or a glass cleaner, or whatever. It's just one product that's used for everything. So, that is how we ended up where we are.

Katie: That story amazes me every single time I hear it. And I know I'm grateful because I use the products all the time in my house. But to highlight something really important about what you just said, and to go a little bit deeper on that, I love that you guys had that whole campaign around tossing the toxins, not just adding in non-toxic products. And I think that's a really important point to highlight because many people listening probably are very aware of wanting to make healthier choices, especially in their homes with small children, and a lot of people are choosing more natural products and bringing them into their home, whether it's personal care, whether it's cleaning products. But I don't know that people fully understand the other side of that, which is getting rid of the ones that you don't want, not just not using them, but not even having them in your house. So walk us through that because we've talked on this podcast before about how indoor air can, for instance, be up to 100 times more polluted than outdoor air. And we know these things have a measurable impact on air quality. But I think sometimes it's easy to underestimate or forget that because it's not necessarily directly and immediately noticeable to all of us unless it's someone who has chemical sensitivity. So, walk us through, like, what that looks like and what products especially we need to make sure we actually get out of the house.

Kelly: Yeah. Okay. So I had a lot of thoughts as you were talking and one is just, because we are in these products every day, we're in our homes every day, we don't always get the symptoms or the red flags from being exposed to them because our bodies adapt. And so, it really is so incredible to remove these from the home. And then you're able to see how you feel. Like, I grew up using, you know, conventional laundry products and personal care products, and it wasn't until I was at Marilee's that summer and changed my laundry detergent, removed myself from those smells, that I then was able to experience the red flags that my body was giving me. And so, like, now fragrance, it's all of a sudden became so strong to me. So we spend, you know, so much of our time, over 90% of our time indoors, and especially now probably even more. During this time, many people are just in their homes, around all of these products and not even, you know, thinking that their indoor air quality is contributing to their physical and mental health. But as we know, it is and really going through your home, and looking at the actual ingredients, and removing, even if you wanna just put them in a box and put them in your garage or outside, can give your body the chance to actually be in a safe haven where it can restore, and regenerate, and heal so that it can better be prepared to go out, and experience, and handle the exposures we're inevitably gonna get when we're out of our homes. So really, we try and encourage and empower people by thinking, "Okay, you have control over your homes. You don't have control over everything once you step out of your home at the places you go, but you do have control of your homes."

And so, we started a campaign called #TossTheToxins and walked people through what to look for on these products in the ingredients and, you know, which ones are safe to keep and which ones you wanna toss. And it's interesting because you'll find that a lot of these products, especially with cleaning, say to remove in a hazardous waste site. But yet, you know, we're using them in our homes, and around our kids, and pets, and then, you know, they're going down our sinks, and our toilets, and showers. So, we really just basically try and advocate, again, this is just common sense message of getting these harmful products out. And I think the biggest issue is that most people just assume, like I did, that these products are vetted, and regulated, and they're safe if they're on the store shelf. And unfortunately, that's just not true, especially with cleaning products. Cleaning products are not really regulated and don't even require an ingredient list. Now, you know, a lot of times the non-toxic cleaners will have an ingredient list, but we are not required to put ingredient lists on our products like personal care products are. And so, really it is up to us to know what we are bringing in our homes and what we're using. And, you know, even in Europe, they have the precautionary principle where an ingredient is considered innocent until...I mean considered guilty until proven innocent. And here in the United States, unfortunately, an ingredient is considered innocent until it's proven guilty. And a lot of times, that means a lot of people have to get sick before we get to that point. So, some of the top products that we walk through with people that can make the most dramatic difference by removing them are pesticides, like bug sprays, you know, Roach sprays, wasp sprays, etc., and just having the pest control come inside the house, all those things. And I just wanna mention, we do offer alternatives for all these things.

So we're not saying, "Okay, you just have to live with bugs." Like, no, there are ways, there are safer ways to do all these things. And that's what we're all about is just educating on the awareness of what the safer options are. So pesticides, and then a lot of cleaning products even have pesticides. Disinfectant cleaners usually have EPA registered pesticides in them. And then cleaning products, especially the ones with fragrance, and then even all the fragrance products like candles, plugins, wall plugins, room sprays, etc., those are all really important. Laundry products with fragrance, especially as they are around us 24/7. You never escape them. They're on our sheets, clothes, pajamas, everything. And those not only affect us, impact us by inhalation, but also absorbing into the skin. And so, we are really big about dryer sheets and laundry detergent being things that you, you know, really look at and some of the first things to change. And then a lot of people just don't realize that, that single word fragrance, which is unfortunately found in a lot of non-toxic cleaners, has chemical ingredients that are carcinogens, asthmagens, obesogens, neurotoxic endocrine disruptors, you know, all these things that we just do not want around us. And once you remove these, often people will say, "Oh my goodness, I don't have migraines anymore, or I don't have to take my allergy medicine anymore, or my child doesn't have to use their inhaler for asthma anymore," things like that. So, it's just incredible how the simple act of removal and, like you said, you know, not just adding in safe products and keeping these other products under your shelves, but removing them, that's what's really gonna make the most impact on your air quality, and therefore, your health.

And an aha moment, after Marilee removed that box, that really led to this push that we have about removal was a few days after removing that box, she kept thinking, "Oh my goodness, like, I can't believe, like, that made such a difference. Was it that box or was it just coincidence that he was able to stay inside the house that day? And she was at the grocery store and turned down the cleaning products aisle, and just it all of a sudden hit our house, wow, these products are not only closed, but still sealed, and you can smell them so

strongly, that, you know, the VOCs are coming out of the bottles at parts per million, parts per billion, even parts per trillion level and contaminating the air. And so, she realized that that's what's happening in our homes. You know, all of these products, oftentimes, people have 30 different cleaning products alone in their home, and all that all these products accumulate and just kind of create this toxic soup. You know, unknowingly we create this polluted air inside of our homes. So, again, just this practice of removal, instead of just adding in the good, but actually taking out the bad too, really has made all the difference for so many of our clients and our customers. It's so fun now to see our customers write in and say, "Wow, you've changed our lives, or my family's life, like, from your #TossTheToxins program and from your products, being able to allow us to remove so many other products." So, it's been pretty amazing.

Katie: And the beauty of it too, I recommend the Concentrate you guys have all the time because it works for literally everything, but it's also so much more ecofriendly because you're reducing your packaging so much. And we just keep a spray bottle, like a glass spray bottle in every room pretty much. So we always have it on hand to use for really whatever we need. And it's my go-to, like, first with stains with kids, which are constant. I just spray it straight on the stain. Another thing you just mentioned that I think it's really important to delve into a little more is that the fragrance component because I think, like, the idea of just when you walk into someone's house, often it's like every house has kind of its own smell, and often that smell is laundry products or air fresheners. And again, those are things that seem somewhat harmless. I don't think most people realize just how dramatic of an impact they can have and also kind of what the difference is between something being just fragrance-free or unscented and what those terms actually mean when it comes to products. So, just walk us through what we need to be aware of.

Kelly: Yeah, so that was actually really eye-opening to me years ago. I did not realize until we got into this, you know, cleaning products world, that fragrance-free does not mean unscented or unscented does not mean fragrance-free. They are very different in terms of... Fragrance-free means there's actually no fragrant chemicals or masking sense or anything in the product. Unscented can actually still have chemicals in there that are fragrance chemicals, but as long as they are not in there to give the product a scent, then they can be in there but neutralized by masking odors or chemicals that neutralize the smell. So really unscented can still contain fragrance, which is pretty just crazy. So yeah, that's something definitely for consumers to be aware of.

And like I said, fragrance has a whole host of, you know, chemicals that can be in there. Over 4,000 chemicals can be found in the word fragrance alone. So, always look for that word fragrance on an ingredient list and opt-out of that. You wanna look for, you know, organic or wildcrafted essential oils instead if you do want a scent. And by the way, you can add essential oils to Branch Basics, but we keep it fragrance-free, especially for the immune-compromised. This fragrance-free is a lot better for, you know, stimulating an immune reaction.

Also, with asthma being the number one chronic illness in children, fragrance usually is a big thing to remove. That makes a big difference for a lot of families very quickly. It's pretty cool. I mean, it's crazy, there's so many scented things now. There's even scented toilet paper, scented, you know, stickers, shoes, everything. So, it's just something to be aware of and, you know, remove as you are able, but knowing that fragrance is a big thing and that makes a big difference. There's actually a great documentary called "Stink!" on Netflix that I tell

everyone to watch. It'll just kind of open your eyes and motivate you to go through your home and get rid of the fragrance stuff. Have you seen that, Katie?

Katie: I haven't. I'm just making a note right now to add it to the show notes so we can find it.

Kelly: Yes, it's called "Stink!" with an exclamation point.

Katie: That's awesome. I'm definitely gonna check that out. Another thing that's I think top of mind for a lot of people right now is getting rid of bacteria, and especially viruses. And obviously, there's a kind of little bit of a push nationwide for that right now. And people have more fear than usual, I would say about viruses, bacteria, or anything that can lump into a big category called germs. And so they're concerned with if any product can get rid of those particular things. So, I'd love to talk about the natural implications of that as well and what are the best options to use in our home if we are concerned about the viral side?

Kelly: Yeah, so, hopefully, you know, some of the good that will come out of the COVID situation is just more awareness of, you know, removing germs versus always trying to kill. I know the kind of go-to is to think, okay, just wipe it all out, wipe all the bacteria, all the germs out. And that's the sure bet way to stay healthy. But I think more and more research and more and more people are coming to realize that it's not necessarily beneficial to just wipe out all of our good and bad bacteria because that not only affects our microbiome, but also increases the risk of superbugs. And superbugs for anyone that doesn't know, I mean, like, the antibacterial resistant bugs, that actually become, you know, not able to be treated with antibiotics and things in the hospital. So, definitely don't want those. But also just I think it's so interesting, this thought of, like, germ theory versus terrain theory, which essentially, germ theory, Lewis Beshear, kind of based the theory on the human body, you know, is sterile until a germ comes in and causes disease. So, get rid of the germs, wipe out the germs, and that's what you needed to focus on. But actually, I think it's Bushcamp. I don't even know how to pronounce his name, that came up with terrain theory, which is the thought that the microbes and the bugs actually exist naturally in our bodies, and the existence of disease is just a reflection of our bodies or the terrain being weakened. And I like I said, our bodies are constantly burdened with this chemical soup, and toxicity, and all the things we're exposed to and eat every day, etc. And so, the more we can actually increase and build up our bodies, the better off we are fighting and not succumbing to the viruses or bacteria and parasites.

And so Branch Basics removes germs, but it does not kill and wipe out all of the bacteria. So it is much better for your microbiome, the good bacteria in your gut. And actually, you know, removes them instead of just letting them stay in place. And so, we are not a disinfectant. We actually just came out with a toolkit that explains all this and how you can still clean and even disinfect in safe ways that are all backed up by the CDC and EPA. And actually, I don't ever disinfect or sanitize our home, and I hardly ever get sick, and my husband's even a doctor that was working on the COVID team. But if we ever do feel the need to disinfect, I just put a trigger sprayer on a hydrogen peroxide bottle and keep it in the bottle so the light doesn't break down the hydrogen peroxide, just regular 3% hydrogen peroxide, and I use that if I ever do feel the need to sanitize something. So, really, there's no need to expose ourselves to the harmful disinfectants because there are safer

ways. And that way, we are also better preserving our defenses to actually fight the viruses and bacteria, and keep our immune system strong. So it's kind of just about an adjustment in thinking, you know, not all germs are bad, and the way to stay healthy is not just wiping out the germs.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's such an important point right now because we've definitely seemed to have shifted into a, let's just kill all the germs perspective recently, which I can understand, the fear people have based on that. But it's important to not forget, like you said, that our whole body is bacterial and is a microbiome, and we do more harm than good, especially with the little ones, when we just overly sanitize everything. And, like, definitely I'm a huge fan, like I said, of yours. And to circle back on a couple other household practical suggestions, I'd love to delve into two particular areas. The first being pest control. I know you guys have resources for this, and I'm gonna link to a lot of your blog posts because you guys have a wealth of information. But I know where I live right now, in hurricane season, all of the ants seem to be trying to come in the house to get away from the hurricane. So, I'm curious if you have any just practical tips people can use for pest control?

Kelly: So, there are lots of different things in our document, our PDF, but there are a few brands that are great that are like EarthKind, and Wondercide. But they're also just a lot of, like, DIY easy mixtures. And then, like, diatomaceous earth is great for ants. And actually, you can even use Branch Basics to spray on ants because soap is a great pesticide or has, you know, pesticide action. And so, there's also a great remedy for mixing, like, powdered sugar and borax and cornmeal for roaches, and things like that. So yeah, all kinds of stuff. It's very interesting. But for ants, specifically, you kind of have to figure out which kind of ants you have and to decide which method is gonna be the best. But there are several options. And something I just remembered I wanted to say, is that we used to kind of think the dose makes the poison. So a lot of times people will see on a label that there's only, you know, a very small percentage 0.2% or 0.02% of the active ingredient pesticide or of the fragrance or whatever the preservative is in a cleaning product or whatnot. And I just wanna say to that, that that is something that newer science, the science of epigenetics, has shown that even small amounts of ingredients or chemicals can turn on and off genes. And so the dose does not always make the poison. And that's especially true with the endocrine disrupters since our hormone receptors are so delicate. But I just want people to realize that because I know that it's very common to think, "Well, it's just a little bit or, you know, we only use it on this thing and not everywhere every day" or whatever. But those add up, and especially if you have someone in the home that's trying to heal, those things can make a big difference. And even with, like, skin, like eczema and things like that, like one preservative, like from the isothiazolinone known family, like methylisothiazolinone is a common preservative. Just that one preservative in a nontoxic list of ingredients has been shown over and over just in my own personal experience of talking with people to prevent the eczema or skin issue or allergy from healing. So, that is something I just want people to realize that the dose does not always make the poison.

Katie: That's such an important point. Yeah, like, I think it's hard to wrap your head around at first, just how dramatically these things can impact us because unlike food or unlike other variables, like supplements in our lives, it's not like a direct necessarily impact or it's not as visible, so it's easier to ignore. And it is such an important area, I keep going back to it, especially with small kids, because there's so much more potentially at risk from a lot of these things. We've talked about the fragrances already a little bit. And I'd love to just go through some natural suggestions for this as well because certainly, nobody wants their house to not smell

good. But I know there are so many ways to do that and accomplish that without the synthetic fragrances. I'm a big fan of a lot of essential oils and we keep those going in diffusers pretty often in our house. But I'm curious if you have any other suggestions beyond that.

Kelly: So, it's interesting. I have come to just love, like, opening the windows whenever possible, and not having any fragrance. My husband's always like, "Can we please defuse some essential oils? Like, give me a smell." I just kind of love, like, no smell. But for those of you who love a smell, like you said, Katie, essential oils are great. But also even just dipping some, like, on a cotton ball or even putting, like, vanilla or something on a cotton ball on a little plate can really, like, do more than you realize, in terms of filling up the room. And boiling some herbs or spices and things in a pot on the stove. And that's a great one for holiday time even but, you know, some cinnamon sticks, or cloves, or whatever, in a pot on the stove. And yeah, there are some sprays now too with essential oils. You don't always have to diffuse. So, things like that can definitely replace the desire for, you know, air fragrant air fresheners, and things. But honestly, especially with the fall weather coming, opening the windows, and even just for 10 minutes a day can really make a difference in your air quality, and just flush out a lot of the harmful chemicals in VOCs, the volatile organic compounds, and fill your home with fresher air. That's gonna be better for you and your family. So, definitely open the windows when you can.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's such a perfect tip as well and like you said, very timely right now. And as the temperature drops, we live in a relatively warm area. So we often don't turn on our heat until January sometimes or sometimes not at all. And I love the cold, so we open the windows quite a bit. My favorite thing in the world is sleeping at night with the windows open, and it's really chilly, but you have a warm blanket. And there's a word for that I forget what it is, but in Europe, they actually have a word for that. But yeah, it's such simple tips. And the beauty of this is, like, in some health changes, I feel like if you have a specific health condition, you have to do a lot of things that are either more effort or more money or it can get expensive. And this is one area where it's actually easier and cheaper, and a lot of these things are either free, like opening your window for just getting rid of this stuff or actually save you money, like using Branch Basics Concentrate, instead of buying dozens and dozens of products. And I love that we talk about that for moms because certainly, time and money are big constraints for a lot of people. And this is an easy switch.

Kelly: Yeah, for sure. And for anyone, again, that's, like, not wanting to throw away products because you spent money on them, I totally get that. Just put them in a box and even if you still wanna use them, just having them out of the house and using them when you need them, and making sure there's good ventilation, like, having the windows or doors open, the exhaust fan's on, like, that alone even is so much better than just having them sit all the time in the home, you know, under the sinks or wherever, in the cabinets, in closets. So, I just kind of really wanna challenge and encourage moms or parents or just anyone out there listening to really just experiment, like put them in a box and experiment taking them out because just getting them out of the house where they're not just sitting there all the time is enough to make a difference.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I'll make sure to put a link in the show notes to the starter kit because I know you guys have a discount just for listeners on that one, so I'll put the discount code in the show notes. But for anybody who's not familiar with you guys yet, let's just do a brief walkthrough of, like, kind of, like, what the

concentrate is and all the different things that can be made into because it truly is pretty much the only cleaning product I keep in my house at this point.

Kelly: I love that. And yeah, I will say we went through a lot of iterate, I mean, over 100 formula iterations working with chemists. So, when we were trying to create the formula, we had all of these criteria. We wanted it to be safe. We wanted it to actually work. So, for safety, we knew we did not want it to irritate eyes, or skin, or lungs. And we actually had third-party dermal testing to ensure that it did not irritate the skin. And that figured out, the researchers actually said it was the first product that they had ever tested that acted like the control. So it was so neutral and safe on the skin, that it acted just like the saline control, which was pretty awesome. So it was like the safety component along with wanting to make sure it worked because we knew that if it didn't work, people wouldn't, you know, continue to use it because obviously, you gotta get your surface...you gotta get your house clean, and you gotta get your stains out but, you know, you just want it to be safe too. So, we are big about you can have your cake and eat it too. You don't have to just sacrifice efficacy to use a safe product.

Katie: Yeah, and that always blows my mind that it was so safe that I mean... And I feel completely comfortable putting this on my kids, even when they were babies, and letting them use it to clean anything in the house, which is awesome because they can now be involved and help with anything. It's so great to have natural options like that.

Kelly: Yes. Okay. Wait, I wanna cut in and say, I actually do not bathe my babies all the time. I use it sparingly because, like, we talked about the microbiome and bacteria, even soap can strip a lot of our, you know, the good bacteria and oils on our skin. So, I just want moms out there, parents out there to know that I do not use it every day, you know, on my kids at that time.

Katie: Oh, I'm so glad you said that, as well.

This podcast is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals. Beekeeper's is on a mission to reinvent your medicine cabinet with clean remedies that actually work. I am a huge fan of these bee powered products and want to share about one of my favorites. It's called B-powered and it's a superfood honey that goes beyond all the amazing benefits of raw honey. My kids love this as a superpowered treat in the morning with yogurt and chia seeds and I love it for its many benefits. I'll often grab a spoonful for a healthy energy boost when I need it during the day. But it is so much more than just that. I would say it's probably the most powerful honey on the planet and that's because this isn't just any honey. It's a therapeutic blend of propolis, royal jelly and bee pollen supports all day energy and immune function. Essentially, it's a natural energy supplement that won't have you crashing later in the day and I find sprinkling a little of sea salt on it makes it taste amazing and also gives an extra benefit with the electrolytes. It tastes delicious and you can add it into drinks or over foods like yogurt, toast, and smoothies. It contains raw honey which is an easily digestible natural fuel and also bee pollen which is nature's multivitamin and it contains free-forming amino acids and nutrients and is a denser protein source than animal protein (gram-for-gram). It's been researched and used by Olympians to improve endurance and overall performance. Propolis contains antioxidants and germ-fighting compounds, which

work together to support immune health. And royal jelly is the food of the queen of the hive and contains the neurotransmitter acetylcholine and ultra unique fatty acids that promote mental clarity, brain health & focus. B. Powered is your all-day energy support. I also recommend trying their propolis throat spray for defense at the first sign of a scratchy throat or sniffles and their B.LXR for a caffeine free energy boost that lasts all day. To upgrade your medicine cabinet and save 15% on your first order, go to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama to get 15% off.

This episode is brought to you by Gladskin, an incredible new product and resource for anyone who is struggling with eczema. This product is rooted in a really unique scientific understanding of the skin's microbiome. Gladskin has unearthed an innovative new way to solve eczema that helps to treat the root and not just the symptom. It's a new category of non-prescription eczema treatment rooted in endolysin science and has received recognition from today's leading dermatologists and pediatricians. While most microbiome studies have focused on the health implications of what's found deep in the gut we're now finding that healthy skin, just like a healthy gut, requires a balance of bacteria. In fact, four out of five people with eczema have a specific type of imbalance in their skin bacteria or their skin microbiome. And this is where Gladskin comes in. When the skin balance bacteria gets out of balance, eczema is more likely to flare. So a targeted approach to that takes into account the microbiome's good and bad bacteria is critical to relieving the redness and itching of eczema. Although new and unique in its approach in the U.S., this has already been a proven solution for eczema in Europe for five years and received recognition from leading dermatologists and pediatricians. It's also been accepted by the National Eczema Association and is a different approach altogether compared to steroid creams and traditional over the counter moisturizers. The best part of Gladskin is hypoallergenic and free of steroids, fragrances, drying alcohols, and harmful preservatives. It's stored fresh in a pharmaceutical quality bottle so they don't need to use the chemical preservatives found in most over the counter creams and lotions. I hear from a lot of you whose children have eczema, and I'm so excited to get to share this resource. You can find out more and get an automatic 10% discount by going to wellnessmama.com/go/gladskin. To get a 10% discount, it should be automatic, but you can also use the code `WellnessMama10` if you have any trouble.

Another area I think that would be really fun to talk a little bit about is related to a question I get often from moms. I think, like I've said this before, moms have so much on our plates in today's world. And it's wonderful all the things we're able to do, but also nothing got taken off of our plate. So many people listening are managing household and kids but also work. And I know you're a very busy working mom as well. So I'd love any tips you have for balancing that, especially with young ones because I feel like that was the busiest days for me is when my older kids were little and I didn't have any big kids yet. So, I'd love to hear any tips you have for anyone listening on navigating that.

Kelly: Yes, for everyone, I keep telling Katie, "You are amazing. I don't understand how you do everything you do and have all these kids and be such a hands-on mom. Like, what?" And she keeps trying to tell me that I'm in the thick of it, and that it'll get easier and easier as the kids get older. But yes, I do not have it all figured out. I'm just trying to get more organized. Allison, my co-founder and best friend, she's a lot more type A and organized, and I'm trying to get better at that because I know when things are organized and structured, things go a lot smoother. But yeah, I talk about this with people all the time. Some days, it just feels like a lot and I don't know how to do it all. But I have found that even just simple things of trying to make sure the

kitchen is clean, so when I come down in the morning, it just starts our day off right or eating breakfast outside, even, like, we just sat on the deck 4:00 this morning and sat outside just to get that natural light in our eyes and help give us energy and wake us up for the day. I'm big about, like, kind of trying to start off in those ways and also just trying to really be present in the mornings. Like, I don't turn my phone on... Sorry, well, I turn my phone on airplane mode at night and we unplug our Wi-Fi at night. You can just... We actually have a kill switch remote. So you literally just, like, hit the remote. Tech Wellness is a great resource for that or you could plug it into a power strip cord and just flip the switch on it just like you're turning off a light switch. So it's really not that difficult. But anyway, all that to say in the morning, I keep my phone on airplane mode until I drop my three-year-old off at school. And so she has been going to Little Montessori School and she's back in school, so that has been a huge help.

But anyway, just having that, like, time in the morning to just be really present and not trying to be working and looking at text or whatever, when I'm with them, has really just been so helpful for me. And I've just started reading this book, "Read-Aloud Family?" It's so wonderful. I just started and I'm not very far in, but I literally yesterday for the first time, started putting it in practice, and just reading books more, you know, like, while we're eating at the table or just randomly throughout the day. But yesterday, I did it at lunch and dinner, and I'm telling you, I just saw, like, just how it made my girls and our family just, like, more connected, have more fun, like, spark creativity for bath time that was following the book reading. It just was awesome to see how it made my three-year-old, like, want to sit at the table, eat... She ate her full meal. She wasn't asking to watch a TV show, during or after dinner. It was just awesome. And so, I really recommend checking out that book or I think she has a podcast too. But "Read-Aloud Family" is that book. And so, just little things, I don't know, like, just trying to work when I'm working and, like, create boundaries, like, setting them up with an activity, for those of you who are working from home, or just time to go play outside, wherever. We actually just built a mud box, where we literally just put dirt from the local store, like gardening store in a box, like a gardening box. And just let the girls play in the mud and the dirt. And so, that, again, is really great for our microbiome. And just trying to do things like that, that give me permission to be, like, "Okay. It's okay if things get dirty or messy or, like, they just do their thing, while I'm working and not trying to, like, be too rigid with the, like, cleanliness and organization, but also trying to implement structure and organization throughout the day so that everyone kind of knows the rhythm and routine of what to expect. And it makes it smoother for everyone. I think those have been kind of some of the main, like, high-level principles that I've been trying to implement that I've seen make a big impact.

Katie: I'm so glad you brought up dirt, to take a little bit of a tangent on this one because I've written about it before, as well. But I think this is something we're actually I would say deficient in modern times is we don't get enough interaction with the microbial environment of the outdoors.

Kelly: Agreed.

Katie: And so it's funny that we live in a world where we literally actually have to make it a point to get dirty. But talk about why dirt's important, especially for our kids.

Kelly: Yes, well, I mean, basically, like you said, yeah, we just don't get enough interaction with nature. And we are living beings and part of this ecosystem. And so when we're in these little boxes of our homes, and cars, and offices all day, we just are so disconnected from nature and all of the beautiful ways that it positively impacts us. And one of those ways is just getting, you know, in the dirt and getting exposed to the microbes in there that are beneficial for our skin and our guts, and actually build our immunity. You know, we tend to think, like, dirty environments or whatever, make us sick, but in actuality, there's a lot of research that shows, like, the dirt and just kind of not this overly sanitized environment impacts, sorry, builds up our immune system and strengthens our immune system. And I mean, my grandmother even would tell me about how my mom would sit outside and eat dirt sometimes. And the doctor was like, "Let her do it. Like, it's good for her." And so many people have told me how, you know, they grew up on a farm, and played in the dirt, and ate dirt, and they rarely ever got sick. So yeah, I just wanted to create a way that, one, my kids could, you know, get exposed to the dirt and all the benefits for that, just the creative play, the microbiome, all that immune system, but then also the grounding. I'm sure I know you've talked about it before, but just being in contact with the earth really can just make us more calm, can help with anxiety and depression. And so, yeah, I just love creating, like, ways for them to be barefoot and be in contact with the earth.

Katie: Yeah, I'm totally in alignment with you on that one. And I've talked about this a lot recently because it's a soapbox for me right now. But often the overwhelm of motherhood comes from our own expectations or feeling like we need to do more, or that we're not doing enough, or that we'd have more structure or because there are so many activities, or if we're homeschooling, we're trying to make it take as long as regular school, for instance. And I found almost across the board, motherhood gets easier when we give our kids more time for creativity, and outdoor play, and boredom, and things like time in the dirt in the sunshine. And there's so many health benefits that go along with that. And it is a shift. It's definitely not the common approach for a lot of moms. But it's always my encouragement is to give yourself more leeway, and give your kids as much time outside in the dirt in sunshine as you possibly can. It makes everybody's lives so much easier.

Kelly: Yes. And hey, I've been there where I knew all this, like, I've known what we're talking about, and I still just got into the habits of TV and just, you know, things that seemed kind of, like, a quick, easy, I don't know, way to keep your kids entertained, so that you can focus on work. But I will say the more that I get away from TV, the better off we end up being because everyone just is happier, and things end up flowing more smoothly. So, yeah, I really encourage parents just to, like, just try it. Because there will be times where, if your kids are used to a lot of screen time, they're gonna keep asking you and keep asking you. But I found that I just kind of kept at it, kept... Even just, like, start reading a book, if you have the time, if you're able to, I know that's not possible while you're trying to work or if someone's helping you watch the kids, like, have them just start reading a book. And oftentimes, because we'll just all of a sudden, start sitting down and listening. So it's been cool for me to see that in action.

Katie: I love it. And speaking of books, that's another question I love to ask toward 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?

Kelly: I never liked this question. Okay. Well, to be honest, I don't like this question because I've never really been a big reader. I have come to love podcasts. But I just have never really been a big reader. And honestly, I was thinking as I started reading this "Read-Aloud Family" book, I think that part of that is because I didn't really cultivate this, like, love of reading at a young age. And it became just, like a homework assignment, you know, and it just wasn't something that I was drawn toward. And I have now, like, just with my own kids, seen that I wanted to be different for them. And so, you know, I don't know, who knows, maybe this "Read-Aloud Family" book will be one of my biggest life-changing books. I mean, I've read a lot of health books here and there, and they've all been great. But honestly, I've learned most of what I know from Marilee, my co-founder. And so I'm sorry, I don't have a silver bullet answer for you.

Katie: I actually love that. And I love your honesty and vulnerability in that. And yeah, I think that's... This is a new book suggestion, the "Read-Aloud Family." I have not even heard of that one and no one recommended it here. So I'm gonna make sure that's linked in the show notes. And I'm going to absolutely read it myself.

Kelly: Yeah, I mean, it's interesting because I'm only a few chapters in but she's saying and mentioning research that talks about how even reading aloud to your kids that can read, you know, like, middle schoolers and high schoolers, they can obviously read on their own but the research benefits of reading aloud to them even. So, yeah, check it out.

Katie: I love it. That is fascinating. Yeah, so appreciative of that recommendation. And to kind of wrap up and summarize, well, actually, before we move on, I wanna say, too, that's such an important point for our little ones because a friend of mine Naval Ravikant, who has a podcast as well, he talks a lot about reading. And one of his quotes is, "Read what you love until you love to read." And so for our kids, it's like finding the things they love and that are interesting to them and, like, starting early, so that they develop that love. It sounds like this book is a perfect resource for that.

Kelly: I love that. And yeah, I've already seen too just how it's cultivated creativity. And like you said, you know, boredom does that as well. So, I think a lot of times we, like, don't want our kids to be bored. But boredom and then reading, it just can explode our kids' imagination.

Katie: And then lastly, what parting advice would you like to leave with the listeners today?

Kelly: I think I really just wanna drive home the message of, like, we have control in our homes, the air quality in our homes, and just encourage people to know what you bring inside your home. So many times, we just bring products inside of our homes without thinking about what's actually inside the bottle. And so I just really want to encourage people to start thinking about what's actually inside the bottle, or container, or whatever it is that you're buying and using in your home and around you and your family, not just reading the label on the front.

Katie: Absolutely. And like I said, I will make sure that we link to some of the resources you guys have for that in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm. For any of you listening, they have some incredible resources, I will link to some of my favorites, as well as to their starter kit. And so you guys can find that in the discount code. Kelly, I know firsthand how busy it is to run a business and a household, and with little ones, and I'm so appreciative of you taking your time to be here today and sharing.

Kelly: Of Course, thank you so much for having me. Okay, one more thought because I want people who get easily overwhelmed by the thought of having to, like, remove all these products to hear this. It's easy to think that, like, it's super overwhelming and to put it off or to think that it's just like too much to do, but honestly, it's all about a mindset shift and the way that you view it. Because if you can view it as an opportunity and, like, as a way to experience like freedom, then it will motivate you to actually go through your home and look at these things. Because it's freeing to actually be read of the ways that these products are undermining our health. So, just wanna leave with that final thought of, you know, it's all about the way you look at it. And if you can view it as an opportunity, I think it'll help you not be inhibited by feelings of overwhelm.

Katie: I love that reminder. I think you're right, that's so important, especially if it's a new thing you're just starting off on. And a perfect place to wrap up. Kelly, thank you again. I love the work that you do and I love Branch Basics.

Kelly: Of course. Okay. Thank you, Katie. I really appreciate you having me. Hopefully, it will help her inspire someone.

Katie: Thank you. 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.