



Episode 380: How to Use CARs- My Secret for
Mobility and Strength (+ HRV, FRC and Kinstretch)
With Hunter Cook

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is brought to you by Four Sigmatic. You've probably heard me talk about them before. I love this company that is known for its delicious superfood, mushroom elixirs, and especially mushroom coffees. I have been starting my day with their ground mushroom coffee with Lion's Mane for a long time. And I love how much it helps me focus and stay creative and productive the whole day. Mushroom coffee is more than just regular coffee. The addition of this incredible mushroom, Lion's Mane, supports productivity and creativity in a really unique way. This coffee also includes Chaga, which I've talked about on this podcast before. It's known as the king of mushrooms. And I love it as a functional mushroom because it supports whole-body health and its antioxidant properties give it a special ability to help support regular immune system function. One question I get a lot when it comes to this is, does this coffee taste like mushrooms? And I can guarantee and want to make sure I explain, it tastes just like regular coffee, not at all like mushrooms. But you get the benefits of these incredible mushrooms that, like I said, they improve my whole day. Mushroom coffee is also gentle and easy on the gut. So I find I'm much less jittery than when I drink other types of coffee and there's no crash at the end. The reason I love Four Sigmatic so much, all of their products are organic, vegan, and gluten-free, and they test every single batch in a third-party lab to make sure it doesn't have any heavy metals or allergens, bad bacteria, yeast, mold, mycotoxins, pesticides, etc. So, you are getting not just really high-quality coffee but also that extra boost from these highly beneficial mushrooms. And I personally know the founder of Four Sigmatic and the standards that go into these products. They stand behind everything with 100% money-back guarantee. I worked out an exclusive offer just for podcast listeners to receive a 10% discount on any Four Sigmatic order. It's a perfect time to try all of their best-selling blends. Like I said, I love their mushroom coffee with Lion's Mane, also a really big fan of their Reishi Elixir and Reishi Cacao for at night to help me drift into really deep restful sleep. And they have other single and blended mushroom elixirs that I often incorporate during the day because they don't have caffeine but do give a boost of antioxidants and other beneficial compounds. To check all of it out, go to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and use the code Wellnessmama at checkout to save 10%.

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

Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com, that's wellness with an E on the end, my new line of personal care products including hair care, toothpaste, and hand sanitizer.

This episode is with one of my favorite people and it's about something that has become increasingly important to me in my own life over the last couple of years. I'm here with Hunter Cook of Hunter Fitness, who became a close friend when I visited Finland with Four Sigmatic a couple of years ago. I've had him on before and I wanted to have him back on to talk in depth about his whole approach to things, especially something called CARs which we go into in depth, and things like FRC and kinstretch, which are other tools that he uses. But in short, I've been using his CARs as part of my morning routine relatively regularly for the last couple of years and have noticed a big difference in my mobility and in my joint strength and health and in my overall strength from this and from his classes.

And I feel like the fundamentals that he teaches are core to any kind of fitness program and they can even be used on their own as a fitness program. But I really respect him and his dedication to his work and how much research has gone into his approach and I've seen the results in my own life. So I wanted to have Hunter on again today to really delve into the specifics and to share these with you. Also make sure to check out the show notes at wellnessmama.fm where he provides a link to his CARs video which he's never shared publicly before unless you were a member of his class. So this is the thing I do every single morning that has made a big difference for me and make sure to check it out and learn from Hunter on that. Hunter, welcome back to the podcast.

Hunter: It is so good to be back, Katie.

Katie: I feel like we opened the door to so many topics in our first episode together, which I will link in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm. If you guys have not listened yet, go start there. But there's so much more to build on that. And I want to start by talking about something that has had a really dramatic impact on me personally, which is CARs, not the kind that you drive, but the kind that I do every morning. And I think that's a perfect foundational place to start. So, this is the thing that you taught me in, I think, a hotel room in Finland while we were waiting on a layover, you taught, like, our whole little group that was in Finland together with Four Sigmatic, and I have done that pretty much regularly ever since then. But for anyone who's not familiar, give us kind of the broad overview of what it is and why it's important.

Hunter: Absolutely. Going back to what you said first, our last podcast, where we opened the door to everything, I still tell everyone to this day that my first podcast with you, which sort of why I'm excited to do a second one, but the first one was one of my favorite conversations I've ever had from a podcast scenario. So, I am excited to be here again. I hope everyone, if they haven't had the opportunity to listen to round one, to get that chance. And it's also funny that you say that I taught you, what I do in a hotel room in Finland, because that sounds like I have quite a funny job, but that's literally what I do is I travel the world and teach people about mobility, not often in hotel rooms, but we were on vacation together.

So, that was a fun experience. But yeah, we got there to catch everyone up because when I meet someone new, when people ask me about what I do, and I start talking about joint health and joint longevity and joint mobility, people always say, "Well, what can you teach me today? Like what's the best thing I could do? My shoulder hurts. My hip hurts. My back hurts. What can you teach me?" And regardless of how you ask the question, like, no matter what joint you point to, you could point to your ear, you could point to...which is not a joint, but you could point to your head, you could point to your neck, you could point to your wrist, you could point to your big toe, and you could ask for help, and it's all going to start the same.

We're just going to start with CARs, as you said. And for people that don't know what that is, it's an acronym that stands for controlled articular rotations. And it's from the FRC system, which is what I travel the world to teach. And I taught you with what we call the morning routine because CARs, in general, have a lot of application. We use them from an assessment standpoint, we use them from a joint health and longevity standpoint. We use them as training. We use them in rehab. There's a spectrum that we use them on. And when it came to what I taught you, I taught you where we start everybody, which is the basics, which is a very low-intensity version of moving all your joints around through their full workspace, which we call the morning routine. And we call it the morning routine because we ask all of our clients and students and friends and family, and basically every person that I meet in my life ever, to do it every day when you wake up in the morning.

We call it the low-hanging fruit of the mobility world, because it's very easy to do after you learn it. And it probably has the most reward and the most opportunity for improving things in your body for very little effort. And it takes anywhere...like everyone's different, right? It depends on how slow you're moving and how many reps you choose to do. But a full morning routine takes anywhere from, I wouldn't say 10 to 15 minutes, it could be done faster. It could take longer, but on average, 10 to 15 minutes. And what we're asking you to do is to move your joints through their active range of motion, your full workspace, and your full workspace is what we call a combination of all of the degrees of freedoms of a joint, but very specifically in an active rotational manner and avoiding any pain because we don't want people to be pushing into painful areas of their joints.

And the benefits that come from such a practice is something I could literally lecture your podcast listeners here for hours because that's what I actually travel the world to teach. I'll give some summarized versions, but there's really an outrageous amount of benefits from something as simple as rotating your joints through space in a pain-free manner. One of them being, and I'll just kind of list off some of my favorite points here, is that it's a range of motion maintenance practice because, you know, because you've taken my Kinstretch classes, we have other tools for improving range of motion, pails, rails, and other strategies within the system. But CARs, as a basic, easy thing to do in the morning, it's a range of motion maintenance. Because one thing we do understand about the human body is that almost everything acts on a use it or lose it basis.

So, if you are strong today, you will probably going to have to continue strength training to maintain your strength. If you are flexible today, you have to continue to use the range of motion you have to maintain it. If

you have a certain amount of intelligence today, you have to challenge that intelligence and continue to learn to maintain that ability. We know that the...especially when it comes to a human tissue standpoint, that using it is what allows us to keep it. So, for some reason, people can understand that about like muscles and tendons and things like that when it comes to strength, but they don't really see it from a flexibility standpoint. A lot of people are very confused and they'll give me or give us, and when I say us, I mean the umbrella mobility specialists that have kind of been to our courses.

We'll hear all the time, you know, "I used to be flexible, and when I was in high school or when I was younger, I used to be flexible, but, you know, then I had kids, and then I got older, and it just got taken away from me." But nothing was taken away from you. It's not because you aged from 25 to 35 or from 30 to 40, that you're less flexible now. The idea is that you probably, when you got older, you also started changing your activity level. You probably stopped doing certain things. Maybe you stopped strength training through full range of motion, maybe you stopped strength training altogether. And the lack of using your range of motion on a regular basis causes you to lose it because your body is efficient when it comes from...this is going all the way back to like a conversation about evolutionary biology, from an evolutionary standpoint, our system and our body is very intelligent and it's not going to keep around tissue that we're not using.

So, it's the same reason that if you were to, you know, forbid, get into an accident today and had to be bed bound for several weeks, several months, you're going to lose most muscle mass. You're going to have a huge amount of atrophy in your body due to the lack of using it. So, our body knows whether or not we're actively using our tissue, and if you're not using your joints through their full range of motion, that is one of the reasons it will be taken away over time. So, one of my favorite benefits of the morning routine practice is use your joints to the range they have and you get to keep it, and you might not be happy with the range you have now based off of what you choose to do with your body or how it feels or whatever else.

But at least what you have today when I meet you, we can maintain this moving forward. We just got to actively use it every day. And the morning CARs routine is one of my favorite ways to address that issue and teach people that the maintenance practice is within their own hands from that point. Kind of rolling off a few other things here. Another reason I asked you to do the morning CARs routine is because we know for a fact that movement is one of the best things we could do from a health standpoint for human tissue as well. And what I mean by that, and I touched upon this in the last podcast, but I'll just bring it up again here because it's so important. The tissue we have in the deeper layer of our joints, so when I'm saying like the joint capsule and the space that holds all that cartilage between two bones, it just doesn't have a very good blood supply, and some areas almost have none.

So, when it comes to why I ask you to do it, I need you to make sure that you are bringing in health and nutrition to the tissues that are at the deepest layer of your joints. So, when we damage muscles and we strength train, they recover so well due to the amount of vascularity that we have, all the arteries, veins, nerve tissue that's there, and deeper tissues also have a supply like that, but either less and in some areas not much at all, but it's still human tissue. It still needs nutrition. It's still cells that need that nutrition. So, moving our joints is shown to imbibe nutrition from the pressure changes that happens when that joint moves through space. And that allows us to make sure that even the deepest tissue of our joints gets movement on a regular

basis. And that's why when we talk about CARs, we talk about trying to get the fundamental joint motion back. Like, if I want my shoulder healthier, I want you to do your CARs. But I also want you to focus on that internal and external rotation because that's some of the movement that gets the deepest layers of those joints to move through space. Oh, man, I could talk about this stuff for hours. Did I answer your original question? Because I could just lecture about CARs forever.

Katie: You did. And I think that brings up several important points. And I'll say for any parents listening, this is something I love to do with my kids in the morning. We watch TED Talks in the morning, and once you get used to doing the morning routine of CARs, you don't have to watch the video to learn how to do it every time. So, it's something we can do as a family while we're watching TED Talks and getting ready for school and stuff in the morning. But you mentioned that it's not that someone took our flexibility, it's that we stopped using it, which I think is a really important point. Because it puts the power back in our hands, and that we can maintain what we have, what we still have. Is it possible to regain flexibility and mobility that we've lost by not using it?

Hunter: Absolutely. And that's literally what I do for a living. I take people and I assess their body. And I basically check passive range of motion, active range of motion, strength. I'm assessing all these different qualities of tissue as somebody goes through a full assessment with me. I assess their CARs. We go through a CARs assessment and everything else. And I then say, "You just showed me what your body's physically capable of. I now have all of the biomarkers and capacities that I need to know about from a training standpoint, you just showed me what your body can do. You can raise your arm to here. You can rotate your hip to here, your spine only segments at these sections." And then I say, "What do you do? What do you want to do?" I guess maybe is a better question. So, I'll work with, you know, a stay-at-home mom who wants to play soccer on the weekends, or maybe I'll work with a professional athlete who's a baseball player, who's been benched for a little while, and he wants to get back on the field.

So, I take the person, I assess what they're capable of. I then talk to them about their goals, short term and long-term. And I say, "All right, well, your shoulder can do this today. And you're telling me you want to do this with it, which you can't do today. You can't get it overhead. You can't reach the arm behind you without pain or whatever else." Can we get that back? Oh, absolutely. That's what smart, intelligent, and well-programmed training is. It's taking a human body and finding their point A, acknowledging and discussing their point B, and then setting out a plan to get from point A to point B, and learning how to navigate that space is actually what I teach at the FRC and Kinstretch courses.

So, I travel and teach seminars on the weekend to other personal trainers, physical therapists, chiro's, massage therapists, coaches, strength coaches, and I teach them how to create those programming plans and make those programming decisions to get people from point A to point B. But when somebody hires me individually, yes, that's what we do. So, if I find that somebody wants a...let's just say somebody doesn't have their full squat, like they can't squat all the way to the ground and they want that back, that's a goal of theirs. I assess their hips, their knees, their ankles, their toes, their spine, find out where the limitations are, and then train them in a way to get it back. Can I confidently say to you that anybody you send to me with different histories

and different injury histories and different anatomical differences and limitations, I can get them to whatever they want?

The answer is no, because the human body is quite complex, and based off of people's previous injuries and current capacities and work ethic when it comes to something that's actually going to take a long time to change, which is our biology, there are absolutely limitations as to what we can improve. I've just yet to meet a single person who doesn't have room to improve. I've taken Cirque du Soleil contortionists and gotten them more range of motion. So, if someone's saying, "Ah, my hip doesn't really have the range it wants, but I've tried everything and nothing really seems to improve it." I say, "You either haven't tried everything or you've tried maybe some of the right things in the wrong way or worked with a wrong coach or whatever else." But it's absolutely something that 100% of people that I work with, we've gotten range, strength, control, and therefore feel betterness that comes along with all those things. So, yes, you can get range of motion back and therefore capacities back to get back to whatever activities you want to do.

Katie: I think it's also really important to understand the flexibility versus mobility idea, because this is something I know you and I have talked about before, but like someone can be incredibly flexible in certain areas, but maybe not actually have the full range of mobility. And I may be butchering the explanation of this. But this is something I've been cognizant of as a mom, with my kids being interested in things like tumbling or gymnastics, not the, like, bar type gymnastics, but more just they're wanting to do back flips and hand springs and learn the splits and all these kinds of movements. And they're just doing it on their own, but wanting to make sure that their joints are also as protected as possible from a mobility perspective, not just the flexibility perspective of being able to do the splits. And I, like I said, I may be butchering that, but can you kind of break down that distinction?

Hunter: Sure. It's a thing that's argued in my industry a lot. And I know that you and I have a different platform, you and I have different audiences. So, I don't think I need to get into the nitty-gritty about the semantics of definitions. I'll give you like how we introduced it at the course because mobility, the reason why so many people argue about this type of things is that there's a lot of definitions out there because it's hard for people to agree upon what people mean. The way that we introduce mobility at the course when I'm teaching it, I say, flexibility is the range of motion that I could bring a joint to passively. So, it's like the extensibility of your tissue. Let's say you lay on your back, I pick up your foot and I move your leg through space.

And now I'm assessing your hamstring flexibility, seeing how far it goes with you relaxed, right? We say that functional mobility, what we teach at the course, is just saying, take that flexibility, so that passive range of motion you have, and now, with your own strength and with your own neurological control, can you match what I brought you to passively actively? So, if I brought your leg up passively and everything was relaxed, it will get to a certain point. Then I say, "Can you move your joints the same amount of range actively?" Now, people, like I said, have different definitions for it. Some people call that active flexibility. Some people...you know, there's all these different terminology, but for ease of, like, consumer use talking to a lot of the gen pop, that's the easiest way I think it is to explain it, is that passive range of motion would be flexibility.

And that in itself is a really the important physical quality of the human body, but not by itself, which is almost like a two-pronged equation because I've been quoted and we've been quoted online for saying flexibility is useless, and that's not true. Flexibility is not useless. Flexibility is probably the most important physical quality of the human body to maintain from a health standpoint, to make sure that we can keep all of our tissues healthy, especially our joints. Because if you believe and you've experienced this, that by improving mobility, you get back freedom, you get back the freedom to do the activities that you want to do, you get back to freedom of getting out of pain. If you believe mobility is important because of those things that you've recognized, then you automatically acknowledge that flexibility is important, because flexibility is the prerequisite for mobility.

As in, to have active range of motion being better, which is the goal I have for all of my clients, you have to be agreeing that you want passive range of motion to be better too, because you can't ever have more active range of motion than passive range of motion. So, no one can ever say the sentence, "I believe mobility is important, but I don't believe flexibility is." And if they say that, they just don't have an understanding of how the human body works, because that's trying to get something without the prerequisite that's necessary for it. So, flexibility is super important. Stretching is super important. It's just not enough by itself. And I can give you kind of stories of people that I've worked with because there are a lot of flexible people out there who also have terrible coordination, terrible motor control, no strength, and therefore a lot dysfunction in their body, that they're dealing with a lot of pain.

And I know this because I work with this crowd a lot. So, I'm based in the Los Angeles area in California. And I'm going to get a little bit of hatred for saying this on a podcast. I say it often in private conversation, but I'll just say it here. I always kind of tell people like, think of your Instagram, when you scroll through, almost everybody follows, like, a few like pretty yoga accounts where it's, like, this guy or this girl, this really handsome guy. This really pretty girl, like, everyone follows a few, like, the really impressive ones. The ones that have like a million followers, really flexible. They always put a back bend photo next to a palm tree on the beach with a sunset. And it's like, "Man, they must have the best feeling body ever. Look at them smiling and all this range of motion."

And then I always tell people, I train all of those people, all of those people that you'd like, think of your 10 favorite yoga stars, I train them, and they all are in terrible pain. They all feel miserable. They're all trying to navigate the same space as everybody else's, which is, how do I make my body feel better? And what they've done is they've built a life's work of practice around mostly, not everybody, mostly passive range of motion improvements. They have pushed their body further passively. I'm not saying there is no active component to yoga. Of course, there is, but it's not a strength training component. I can be confident about that. So, for a lot of people, they've now pushed their joints into their end range of motion for years, for years, for years. And yeah, if you keep time under tension and range of motion into these positions, it'll allow more.

It will get you more flexible, but you're not at the same time strength training it. You're not at the same time building up control around it. So, you end up with a body that's very, excuse my terms, like sloppy or floppy

and all this extra range with no ability to produce force, no ability to absorb force. And those people do not feel comfortable. I won't name anybody, of course, that'd be not okay. But I work with a lot of people that if you just look at their social media, you're like, "Man, that person must feel great. Look at how flexible they are. Look at how happy they are. Look, they must have no pain in their body at all." And it's the exact opposite actually. Same thing with a lot of gymnasts, dancers, martial artists in the sense that...and in my last podcast, I said that those three are high-end things that I would pick when we were talking about children.

Like I would pick those practices, but just like anything else, if you continue to do the same motions over and over again, for years, for years, for decades, it does take a toll on the human body. There are a lot of dancers with beat up bodies, a lot of gymnasts with be beat up bodies, a lot of martial artists with beat up bodies. And what I do respect about the gymnast, dancer, martial artist is that as they opened up range, they also had an active practice around using that range of motion. So, I'd say they follow the definition of, for most, picking up range and simultaneously strengthening it and using it. But for the people listening, once again, I don't think flexibility is bad. I think flexibility is a prerequisite for mobility. I think it's the foundational thing in the human body that we should all be striving to keep up and improve for most people.

But by...in and by itself, just saying, "I want to improve my range of motion," is not a good enough goal. What I want you to realize and what I want everyone to realize is that improving range of motion is step one, but far from finishing. You want to then backfill the range of motion you open up with, with strength. You want to backfill the range of motion up with control so that you can actively use that range, so that you can produce force there and absorb force there. And that is setting you up for success. That's making it so that when your joint ends in these positions that you have flexible range with, if something happens, if something falters, if you fall over, someone bumps into you, if you get hit by something, anything goes wrong in the motion, your body's used to absorbing a little bit of force in that position or producing force to try and get out of it so that your body's like, "Yeah, you stretched me for years to get to this point, but I can't absorb any force here." So, if anything goes wrong and you fall over, knock over, get distracted, and screw up the movement or stretch, that it's instant injury. It's a disaster waiting for happen, and you have a ton of range, with no strength and control to backfill it.

Katie: I love that explanation. What are some ways that we can achieve that balance? Obviously, I know starting with things like CARs in the morning, and I know your classes are geared to do that, but when it comes to other movements that you would consider, like functional movements, for instance, I'll use myself as an example, I've been recently lifting a lot more weights and doing things like high-intensity training or sprinting, just because that's what's fun for me right now, but are there better ways to build that strength around the mobility?

Hunter: Absolutely. So, one thing that we're trying to...I'm trying to change, not I...my community of people is trying to change people's opinion on, is that I want people to stop separating strength and mobility because, and you know this, Katie, because you've been taking my classes for a long time. When you show up to my class, when you're sitting down for a Kinstretch with Hunter class, you're agreeing to do a strength training session. Am I right?

Katie: Yeah. Exactly.

Hunter: Right. So, how I want you to view it, it's not that there is strength training, the mobility training. There's strength...it's just there's strength training, period. And what we're doing with the mobility work is we're just teaching people to how to strength train in a way that they probably weren't training before. And for a lot of people, that's end range of motion, strength training, and it's joint-specific strength training.

So, when you're saying, "I like to strength train and I like to sprint," cool. I want you to do what you want to do. I have no reason to push my goals for what I want to do with my body on you. I want you to continue to strength train. I want you to continue sprinting. I just want to help you do those. And I want to make sure that you can do them for a long time and pain-free. But when you think of most movements, when you think of bicep curls, squats, bench press, you're not bringing a joint through its full range of motion. Even if you're doing a full range of motion, bench press, that's not full range of motion shoulder, because if you imagine what a shoulder can do and say shoulder CARs, it's very different than a bench press. It's not full range of motion elbow.

It's not full range of motion wrist. It's not full range of motion scapula. It is just some...it's little pieces, fragments of those ranges because it's a patterned exercise that we made up, right? So, your strength training, mid-range and partial range for many joints, and these predetermined positions that we decided are important exercises, which is fine. If you'd like to do them, I want you to continue doing them, but it's not enough, not enough for prepping our body for all the things. So, what I'm saying is, do your patterned activities that you like, do your bench press and shoulder press, and do your sprinting and do your activities that you like. And then also have a practice around end range of motion and joint-specific strength training. In the FRC world, we call it internal training, which is, instead of using external tools in the external environment, use internal training.

So, it's meant to be complementary. And this is where people are so, I think, confused when they see, like, if you follow an FRC person and they'll talk about prerequisites and range of motion and things like that, they think that we're telling people, "You're not allowed to strength train. You only are allowed to do these things now, the 90/90 position for hips or certain shoulder exercises from the mobility world." And that's not what we're saying, is we're saying, "Whatever you do, complement your practice with a side of mobility work," which is just saying, "Complement your strength work with this other strength work," just to make sure that we're covering all bases and making sure that as you continue to improve your goals of weightlifting, sprinting, and everything else, that you also have a practice around joint health, joint longevity, and you want to make sure...

Like I always tell people, I care about the goals you come in with, which is the, "I want to bench press more. I want to sprint faster. I want to overhead press. I want to do a handstand. I want to do back flip." Whatever your goal is now, cool. I'll help you get there. But I also care about the goals that you don't have yet, because 5

years from now, 10 years from now, it's going to be, "I just want to wake up without pain. I want to be able to play with my kids without pain. I want to be able to get out of the bed and just spring out of bed and not feel like I have to warm up to get to my day." Like those goals that happen to every single person eventually, you might not be thinking about those yet, but I've worked with enough people to recognize that everyone will get there. So, yes, I'll help you with your bench press. Yes, I'll help you with sprinting, but let's also start a practice today that makes it so you can do those things forever and not have to take three months off, six months off, a year off because something went wrong. You didn't train certain ranges of motion. And now the, oh, crap moment happens, injury happens, and now we have to focus on rehab, recovery, and now we're out of sprinting, we're out of weightlifting for a little while.

Katie: So, I think we probably have the range of people listening, everybody who might be into yoga. I know we have some distance runners, people who do strength training. We also have a lot of moms and women listening who, their goal is just to stay healthy and fit, and to be able to keep up with their kids and to maintain their fitness over time. They may not necessarily be training for big strength goals or for athletic events. So, for someone in that thing, this is why one of the reasons, one of many, many reasons why I love you and your work is because your system can be done from home. And kids actually love doing it. Like, my kids love... Like, as a mom, as soon as I sit down and do something, they all want to do it, and I love that they want to do it. But if someone was going to use this as kind of the actual, like, core part of their fitness routine, walk through how that would work, and would they need to add anything else on? Or could you basically build an entire fitness system on this?

Hunter: Well, I got to say, for one, it is probably one of my favorite things. Like, I get tagged in, you know, Instagram stories, things like that, you know, people will always take a snapshot of them taking the class. And I think my favorite tags are the ones where it's usually a mom. Sometimes it's the father, but like mom, you know, sitting in a 90/90 position with like a little one trying to mimic them right next to them, or someone laying on their side, moving their hip and their, you know, their daughter or their son is next to them, trying to mimic them and move the hip in the same way. It brings me great joy to see the little ones get involved with these classes. And also the parents making the time for it and not, yeah, not saying it's an excuse, but not saying like, "Oh, I have little ones, I just can't do it."

Because I've seen all over the world people take my Kinstretch classes and post online of them getting it in with the little ones at home. And it's just so awesome to see it. When it comes to building a comprehensive and complete program, I do believe that Kinstretch or FRC specific work, and I could also go over the difference between those don't. Let me forget that. But FRC specific work or Kinstretch classes should be a part of everyone's program. That's one of the reasons I latched on to this system so much myself when I first found it, is because typically when I...you know, I've been personal training for a long time, Katie, and I've taken a lot of continued education courses and taken all the seminars. And every time you take these little things where you learn about kettle bells and you learn about barbells and Olympic lifts and gymnastics, and you're learning all these things and you basically pick up like, "Oh, this is good for this kind of clients and this is good for this kind of clients."

And, you know, this seminar specifically, I actually don't know if I can bring this one to my clients. It might be a little too much advanced, like maybe I shouldn't be bringing Olympic lifting to my clientele that are gen pop. When I got to FRC and this series of seminars that I now help teach, it was the first series of seminars where it was just...it wasn't like niche-specific. It was Homo sapien-specific. It was, "Oh, man, everyone should be doing this." So, I always say like, whether I take on a brand new person, that's like just a person who lives next to the gym and they just moved into the neighborhood and they just want to move better, feel better, I'm going to start with FRC assessment. I'm going to start with the functional range assessments and I'm going to teach you CARs right on day one.

If I work with a pro athlete, I'm going to do the same thing. If I work with a circus person, same thing. If I work with a stay-at-home mom and your community, I'm going to do the same thing. Because the way that we view it is look at the human body first, the Homo sapien, the stressors that got us to where we are, and let's take care of that human first, and let's focus on their athletic endeavor second. So I do believe everyone should be doing this. I wouldn't travel the world to teach it if I didn't believe that, I have never found something so applicable to everybody. But I also believe it's not complete in the sense that since it's mostly end range of motion strength training, I would like to see people doing mid-range of motion strength training.

So, just like you do how you do a strength training program, and then you have your Kinstretch classes you take, and then you do your sprint-specific work, that's well-rounded to me because you know your goals and you're making sure that you're checking all the boxes. So, I do believe normal strength training exercises should be in people's programs. I just think that they should be a little more catered to what their body is physically capable of. That's why I think one-on-one work with this is so powerful and, you know, you and I have talked about this a lot about always trying to get someone in for an assessment is the best thing because it's the fastest way to make sure that the program you're following is really fit for you. In an online world, that's not always the easiest thing to do. In a virtual world, it's not always the easiest thing to do.

But if I have a human body in front of me and I get to assess them, not only by the end of the assessment will I know all of the mobility work you need to do. So like if I assess your shoulder, I know all the shoulder mobility exercises you should be doing for the next six months to a year. If I assess your hip, I know what the next year of your training looks like. If I assess your spine, trust me, I know what your spine training is going to look like. I also know, "Oh, okay, now that I know what your shoulder can and cannot do, here's what I would change about your strength training. Here's what I would change about your lower body strength training. I might not do Olympic lifting right now based off of what I just saw your ankles, knees, and hips can and cannot do."

So, although I do think everyone should be strength training, I think that kind of recommendation is a little more individualized. And I plugged this the last time I was on your podcast, but I have to bring it up again because I think that the work that I teach is absolutely the most powerful and effective when it's done in person one-on-one. So, I told you if you want to find a provider that teaches what I do in your neighborhood, functionalanatomyseminars.com, and then you'll go under the FRC tab, and press find a provider, type in your ZIP code, find someone in your neighborhood that teaches what I do. They could teach you the morning routine. They could teach you everything that Katie and I are talking about now. For the people that, like you

said, the reason we're here is like a lot of people just want to work from home, work on their own, that's why we created other options.

Like what Katie is a part of, Katie is a part of my Kinstretch with Hunter online community. And in the Kinstretch with Hunter online community, I basically have a platform built around videos and units and like a classroom to follow. So, you follow, like you go to the welcome unit, and then you go to the CARs unit and learn about CARs, and there's follow along sequences, there's educational sequences, then there's classes to take. And not only do I teach you everything I can...as much as I can as well as I can from a virtual standpoint, but I give you as many resources as possible to be successful with the material as well. I haven't been able to assess you, but I teach you ways to assess yourself. I haven't showed you how to do this in person, but I give you access to videos that teach you how to learn it from multiple angles to make sure that you're doing as well as yourself.

And then my favorite part about all that is it's not just a video resource because that could have easily been done by just uploading my videos to YouTube and making it a playlist available, right? My favorite part about what I do online for the work that I do is I created a community around it. So, besides all of that being in a place...you know, you log in and you have all your videos available to you, and you can go to classes, you can go to the CARs, you can go to all the different breathing videos, but then there's also a community forum where everyone else that's taking these classes around the world. And I don't know the number now, but I have members in countries all over the world now constantly talking in the comment section about how they feel after class, what they learned from class, what they found was better, how they... People are very open about how they altered positions to make things better, to help each other out.

And the coolest thing about that is what people are starting to realize is that they're not taking my classes just as a training stimulus, although that's absolutely okay to do because that's the goal. It is meant to be training, strength training. But it's also meant to be equally informational and educational. So, as people are taking the classes, I'm explaining things in a way, saying, "And if you can't do that, try this. If you can't do that, try this, turn your leg like this. If none of these positions work, you're going to grab a yoga block and put it under your butt and sit up like this." So, not only are we getting the actual training in, but I'm also offering variations and options and all the different ways to learn about your body so that you can build out a home program around the material yourself as well, so that you don't just have to rely on me and my videos to get the work in, but you're learning about how it all works so that you could proceed moving forward really for the rest of your life using this material.

Because just like anything else that we know is good for the human body, it does require consistent effort to maintain those physical qualities. And so, I was talking about earlier, the use it to lose it. Like I can't be a track athlete as a high school kid, and then stop doing cardio in my adult years and expect my heart to maintain those physical capabilities. I have to continue cardiovascular activity if I want my heart to stay healthy. I can't just be a strength training high school student and then stop strength training as an adult and expect to remain strong. I have to continue strength training if I want to maintain strength. So, the material, what people realize is that not only did the CARs and the start of the Kinstretch classes make me feel better, they've made my back pain go away, they made my hip pain go away, my knee feels better than ever, but they also

find a way to fit it into their weekly programming moving forward so that we can continue to feel good moving forward.

And this is where I always put, like, an asterisk at the end of this, hopefully prevent injuries moving forward. And I put an asterisk there because I don't believe injuries are preventable. I just don't believe in that thought. What I do believe in is training people in an intelligent manner so that when things go wrong in training, because they will, because life happens, accidents happen, we mitigate damage. We mitigate issues so that less damage happens. And that's another really well-rounded portion of the practice is that even for the people that feel good, that come and do Kinstretch classes, they start to make comments like, "I didn't even have any back pain or hip pain or knee pain when I started this, but I feel stronger than ever. I feel better than ever." And there, I don't like this word either, but it's another popular buzzword. "I feel bulletproof. I feel like... I've never had my knees feel this strong, feel this strong," when they're playing their activities or sports or playing with their kids at home, whatever it is. And those are always some of my favorite comments to read in the online space, in any space, really, whether it's virtual or not, but it really is a powerful experience to be able to give people, like, really back... That's a term that I love. I keep saying things I don't like, what I love is movement freedom.

We're giving people back their movement freedom so that you could do whatever you want with your body. And like you said, if it's for the mothers at home listening, if that means hanging out with your kids and keeping up with them as they get older and playing your sports with them, things like that, that sounds like movement freedom to me, that sounds like a pretty worthwhile goal. And let's take care of your body in a way that allows you to do that forever.

Katie: Absolutely. And acknowledging, you know, as we get older, certainly, like, joint pain is a common complaint to these people at this age. And so, our injuries and also, like, on an extreme of that, we know, like, people who fall and break a hip, for instance, that can be even life-threatening at times. And so, any opportunity we have earlier in life, we know the benefit of muscle that's really well-documented. But anytime we have the ability to build that and to protect our joints in the process, I certainly can say from my own experience that my joint pain related to playing soccer when I was younger in my knees and ankles is gone. And more recently, my husband started having pain down the back of his leg. And of course, you were the first person I thought to talk to about it. And I knew that the answer would be he needed to do CARs regularly first, and he is still doing that.

He's in the first few weeks of it and he's already noticing an improvement. So, it's amazing how, like, amazingly, rapidly our body adapts. When we start doing that and all geared towards, I love that idea of movement freedom. I think that should be the goal. And of course, like you said, it'll look different for each of us of what we want that to be, but I think that's a really, really worthy goal. You also mentioned both Kinstretch and FRC. So, just for anyone who's not familiar with either of those terms, can you explain the difference?

Hunter: Absolutely. FRC is our short term for functional range conditioning, which is our attention to one-on-one work from a mobility standpoint. All right. So, that's one of the courses I teach and that's how we learn. That's where we learn all the science behind mobility training and load management and all the science behind range of motion improvements and really the why and how everything gets done from the human body standpoint. That's the entry point into our system. That's where we've certified thousands of people all over the world to do this kind of work. And it's how I would work on training your shoulder, Katie, or Seth's hip, or somebody's big toe, or somebody's non-segmenting spine. And that is how address individual issues. Kinstretch is just a name we call for group FRC work.

So, it's not different exercises. It's different programming because if I was to take...let's say you came on a vacation with 10 of your friends, right? So, I have 11 people that show up in my gym. If 11 people show up in my gym and, ironically enough, all 11 people had a right shoulder issue, I would assess each individual right shoulder. And I would probably find slight variances of different injuries and different histories and therefore give different exercises to get each person from point A to point B. And that's one-on-one personal training, like you can call it mobility work, strength work, whatever you want. But that's really what people are looking for, is one-on-one attention and how to get me from point A to point B as quickly as possible. You want to find an FRC provider to work with one-on-one. But the nature of the fitness industry in the last two decades or so has catered towards encouraging people that group training is better.

And although I strongly disagree with the better aspect of it, I think it's not better or worse. It's just different. So, what I can do with group training, I can't give you, Katie, a better program because that's what one-on-one work time is for. What I can do is offer a much more affordable option for a larger portion of the population to experience the work, get more people involved. People like group training, because they like to work with...like they work together with friends. Like that's why class structures are so popular. Zumba, even CrossFit, dance, yoga classes are so popular because people get to go with their friends and do something together. So, Kinstretch is just saying, "Here's how we would program mobility work into a outward-facing public group kind of training model."

And it's not as good as FRC from a one-on-one training standpoint of getting people to their goals from point A to point B, but it's better in other regards. And like I said, now that I have these Kinstretch classes, I could work with a lot of people at once to teach them about CARs, teach them about joint health and longevity, teach them about how to assess themselves as they're going through the class and decide whether an exercise should be in their program or not. So, it might not be the fastest route for one person to get from point A to point B, but now I can get a lot of people started in the mobility world. And most people, and this is just me speaking from experience because I've been teaching this stuff for years, most people do both, like most...like a lot of people come to my Kinstretch class because they hear about it from a friend who's like, "Hey, Jackie said her hips felt great. She started coming this class. I want to start coming too."

Comes to Kinstretch, really enjoys it, starts to feel better. And then says, "I also hear you do one-on-one work. Can I come in and get an assessment?" And then what they get is just more focused FRC work and saying, "For your hip, this is what I would focus on. For your shoulder, this is what I would focus on." Still come to Kinstretch but now that you have your goals set from a one-on-one standpoint, Kinstretch now becomes more

of, like, a body control practice because it allows us to hit your primary goals we found in your assessments and extra ways and other positions, other variations. And then we get to hit some of your secondary goals early on and we get to practice body control, and body control is something that we just can't ever get enough of, especially from a training stimulus standpoint.

And this is a joke that I steal from one of our other master instructors that I travel the world and teach with, but I've heard him say, Dewey Nielsen, he goes, "You know, there's limits to physical capabilities and stressors within the human training program, right?" Like, it's not the more strength work the better, like there's a point of diminishing returns. And if you keep pushing past that, there's a good chance of injury. It's not the more power work the better, not the more agility work the better. I don't even believe it's the more flexibility work the better. Like, there's a point of diminishing returns and pushing past that can be detrimental to someone's programming. But I actually believe no one would ever say, "Oh, man, I have to stop coming to your Kinstretch class because I have a little too much body control now. I'm getting a little too good at controlling what my range of motion is." So, we kind of make that like a little funny about it, but I actually believe it, like, if we're going to focus on control exercises and just taking care of our end range of motion strength, and making sure that you are backfilling the range that you have with control and strength, I don't think that can be overtrained very easily. It's a very safe environment to continue the stimulus of mobility training.

Katie: That makes sense. And I know from my own just experience in doing the classes over time and doing CARs every morning that, like, that muscle control also leads to, or seems to lead to a lot of release of tension or balance in the muscles. And that, like, I used to, for instance, store a lot of tension in my neck and shoulders, and that's much less so now. I'm curious why that would be an also...like, when I first started it, I would notice, especially on, like, shoulder, the shoulder movements, that I would have certain parts of it that felt kind of like poppy. I don't know if that's the right word. But I'm curious the reason for those two things, and if you can kind of explain.

Hunter: So, as for...and I don't remember if we talked about this last time, I feel like I did a little bit, but I'll remind people, why someone feels tight under... Like, imagine, like, I'm opening a scroll that falls to the ground and then rolls across the floor. Like, here are the reasons why we can feel tight today, right? So, when it comes to why someone feels tight, everyone ignores all of the reasons why you can feel tight. And then they look at the other scroll, which is solutions for tightness, and they say "Stretch," right? That's just what we were taught, "This feels tight, stretch it. This feels tight, stretch it. This feels tight, stretch it." But if you're not looking at the causes, the potential causes, just overall life stress can make you feel tight. We've all known that on a stressful day, our neck tightens up, maybe we're gritting our teeth.

Your inability to recover. So, if you're not recovering well, if your nutrition and sleep is not on point can cause things to feel tighter than normal. You know, you and I have talked about resting heart rate and HRV, like all the different other biostats that we could measure. Like, there's so many things that could lead to tightness. One them that most people don't realize is that tightness at your end of your current range of motion is a normal sensation. So, let's just get that out of the way real quick. Like, people look at what I can do with my body, like, you know, how far I can go in certain ranges. And then, like, let's just say I show you how far I could

stretch forward. And it's farther than the average person, right? So, now you look at me and you say, "Oh, I imagine you don't feel tight at all, right?" And you're exactly wrong.

At my end, I feel tight. Because if that tightness wasn't there, the joints dislocate. That tightness is the stress reflex setting in. It's basically eccentric load of the muscle set by the different spindles and whatnot in that area. I don't want to get into the science. I don't know if your audience is into that. So, it's basically the threshold that's set, that tightness is there to protect you. Like, it stops you from going further into a range that your nervous system does not trust you going in. So, it's not that you're eventually going to stretch and one day you're going to wake up and then reach for your toes and not feel tightness in your hamstrings. When we typically say someone's tight, what we're saying in the subtext is, "I've experienced tightness way earlier than I think I should." Does that make sense, just to kind of start the conversation there?

Katie: Yeah, it does.

Hunter: Okay. So, it's not that tightness is bad. Tightness at end range of motion is a normal sensation. But if we're saying the person is tight very early on, and they're not supposed to be tight that early on, there's so many things that can cause it. But one of the most really overlooked areas that I think most people don't address, and I easily prove this, especially if people come to Kinstretch classes for a few weeks in a row, is that it's a capacity issue or a strength issue. Like, I use this example all the time and I may have even used it on your last podcast. But if your hip flexors, which is a commonly "tight area," if it's just tight all the time, and then you stretch it, you stand up and you feel better because it has an effect, it's short term, but it has an effect.

You stand up and you go, "Yeah, it's not tight anymore. Cool. I can go about my day." But if you wake up tomorrow and it's tight again, I'm going to make an argument that stretching isn't the solution. And I make that argument and I have hundreds and hundreds of case studies on this. I could let you talk to any of my students in person, online. Let's strength train those hips instead. Let's strength train the deep stuff of the hip via rotation. Let's strength train the superficial stuff, like the hip flexors, hip extensors, things like that. And almost always, I'm going to say more than 9 times out of 10, right? So, above 90%, people instantly, and it's within their first class or within the first couple classes go, "I didn't even realize my hips don't feel tight anymore." Like, even just the introduction of strength, and it's not even solved yet.

But the introduction of putting a little bit of strength work into that area provides 10 times the sensation of relief than stretching ever has. And that's enough. The cool thing for me is they go, "Oh, just wait. You feel like that after just one session, imagine a month down the road, two months down the road, six months down the road, a year from now, if you actually keep this up, right?" So, now people start to train their hips on a regular basis. And since their body doesn't perceive that joint as weak and it's end range emotion anymore, it no longer sets that tight threshold too early. It allows you to express your normal joint range of motion, and that allows you to continue to move about your day without feeling restricted anymore. So, for a lot of people, just the introduction of strength training in positions they've never trained before, which is, for us, end range positions, it gets rid of a lot of that tightness feeling because, whether you realize it or not, you just

inadequately trained those joints in those positions before, you didn't know that, but trust me, your nervous system did, and that's why it felt tight. That's why it was guarding you from going further in that direction.

Can that blanket statement be used for everything, every type person, every direction? No. Like I said, the scroll of why someone tight is quite long, but for a lot of people, the introduction of strength training in an FRC or Kinstretch setting really makes a difference with how they view tightness in the relationship to their body, and what it actually means, where it's coming from, and what they can do going forward. Because the cool thing is, now that people have that realization, they don't spend hours and hours foam rolling and stretching anymore.

They go, "Oh, like, I feel tight again." And then they go, "Yeah, I kind of fell off my homework. I haven't been doing my CARs. I haven't made Kinstretch the last two weeks." So, now they don't go back to doing what they're doing before, they recognize, "I just have to get back to my strength work and my body will feel good again." Because we know, this is not an opinion, strength is one of the best things we can offer the human body. Like, that's what's going to keep us moving forward in our lives as a species, like strength is what our body is after. We need to keep it strong to have a fulfilling life, a capable life, a injury-free life. We need to make sure our tissues are strong. They can produce force. They can absorb force.

Katie: Another thing I'm curious about, and I know you said off the air that this could be somewhat specific to me, but I'm still curious about the mechanism. When I started doing this more regularly, I noticed an increase in my heart rate variability. And I even noticed on days when I do a Kinstretch class, my HRV is higher overnight than on days when I don't. I also know from when we started tracking this in Finland that you have very high HRV on a regular basis. So, I'm curious, I know that you said that this may not apply for everyone, but why some people might experience HRV benefits from this?

Hunter: Sure. So, for those listening who maybe are unfamiliar, I don't know how much you've talked about this with your audience, but HRV is heart rate variability. And it's a measure of our... It's complicated, but I said this last time, and one of the things I said on the last podcast is the nervous system is the most complicated thing we've ever tried to study. It is way too complex. I wish I was in the neuroscience field because I'm fascinated by this stuff, but I'm going to make some easy, easier explanations out of this, but it is more complicated than this. But HRV is a measure. It's our current, probably, best to measure, at least easily accessible wise for our autonomic nervous system. And it's trying to measure our...or what we are making some assumptions around is that it's metrics for physical fitness and it determines our body's readiness to perform.

So, HRV, what it means is that there is variability in our heart rate because a lot of people are under the assumption that if they have like a heart rate of 60 beats per minute, that their heart rate is once every second. So, at 60 beats per minute, that's 60 times in a minute, which is 60 seconds. So, they assume every second there's a heartbeat, right? But that's not true. It's actually...it could be 0.9, and then the next one is 1.1 away, and the next one is 1.15 away, and the next one is 0.95 away. And the difference is what's called the RR intervals on an EKG reading. So, those big spikes that you see in the heart rate, if you're watching on EKG, how

long it is from the next one to the next one. And it turns out that there's a lot more variation or variability in the heart rate than we originally thought. And in biology, just to kind of plug this a little more, variability in biology is a good thing. So, when I actually talk to my students and when I teach the courses that I teach, we talk about how the joint work we do is improving movement variability.

And I can get back to that as well. But that's the goal of all of what I teach is saying, "Let's give your joints back health, let's give your joints back range. Let's give your joints back strength and control because that means they have more options." If they have more options, they have more movement variability. If there's more movement variability, you have a healthier system to go about your sports and activities. So, with the heart, there's a heart rate variability. And one of the main...our current understanding of why there is variability is that we have two branches of the autonomic nervous system, the parasympathetic and the sympathetic. And they're both constantly giving our heart signals. Sympathetic is giving our signals to be faster. Parasympathetic is giving it to beat slower. And based off of how much your sympathetic and parasympathetic are interacting with your heart, the pull from both branches of the autonomic nervous system makes variance in the beats. It causes a fluctuation in the heart rate. Does that make sense?

Katie: Yeah, that's a great explanation.

Hunter: So, when there's that pull, when there's a lot of variability, so when you're measuring it and you actually get like a high score, the idea is that with a high score of heart rate variability, it means that your body's responsive to both the parasympathetic and the sympathetic. And our understanding is that this is a sign that the nervous system is "balanced." I never liked that word, but it's balanced. And your body's basically capable of adapting to its environment and performing at its best. So, when we see a lot of variability in the heartbeat and you get a high score, what we have decided is that means that your body's probably ready for a good physical stimulus. When you have a low heart rate variability score, and usually means that, like, often one branch has dominated.

Like, usually the sympathetic branch is dominating. It's sending stronger signals than parasympathetic. And in certain times, like when you're running a race, when you're doing something that requires that, that's obviously a good thing. But if you're just at rest and you wake up in the morning and your sympathetic is overpowering, that's where you'd get a lower HRV score for maybe a reason that we're not happy about. And therefore, we make an assumption that it's acting that way. Your sympathetic is a little more overdrive maybe because of fatigue, dehydration, stress, maybe you're getting sick, needs to recover. And when it has that lower HRV, there's fewer resources that are available to dedicate towards exercise and competing other things. So, we want a high HRV, but the idea is not high or low. This is why I said, like, when you asked me questions about this, it's very individual.

So, like you said, I have an unusually high HRV, even on my low days, I'm much higher than the average person. And then my high is very high. But the idea is to not compare because there's so many factors. Genetics plays a part, age plays a part, previous experiences, a lot of things that are out of our control. And then there's a lot of things that are in our control, but it is very individualized. So, it's not that because my HRV

is higher I'm more fit than you. And if your HRV is lower, your less fit or less ready. All you want to do is measure on a regular basis to see trends over time. That's kind of what the data is meant to be used for, not to determine good or bad, but how am I doing compared to myself? Does that make sense?

Katie: Yeah. Absolutely. That's, I think, a really important point. I'm glad you brought that up.

Hunter: So, the idea is, is that if you're taking care of your body and you're focusing on intelligent training, when I say intelligent training, I'm saying imparting progressive overload and actually improving physical fitness, but also recovering well, focusing on nutrition, focusing on sleep, focusing on all the things that are in our control, right? Avoiding alcohol, healthy diet, quality sleep, potentially meditating, hydration, all things that we know have a positive effect on HRV. If you look at your trends over time, over months, you should see a general increase in your HRV. Whereas if you're tanking, if you see a decrease in your HRV as a trend, usually it means things are being overstressed, overworked. Maybe you're training a little too hard and not recovering enough. Maybe there's other stressors in your life that you're not accounting for. The problem with just picking like a certain date and looking at the HRV is there's so much we don't understand about this stuff yet.

That's why there's so many peaks and valleys. Like, we always say, like there's been blinds on the nervous system forever. Like, we we're trying to understand this system that's in our body that's very complicated. And HRV is, like, a way for us to peek through the blinds a little bit and trying to get an idea of what's going on on a day-to-day basis. But the problem is, is that if I measure first thing in the morning, and then I, say, go to the bathroom and drink a sip of water and then measure again, it's already different. If I then take a lap around the block with my bulldog and then come back, it's already different. If I get a call with some really bad news, it's already different again. That's why, like, a single data point doesn't mean anything. That's why I'm telling people, like, if you are going to measure this, look for the trends. Because if you measure at the same time every day under the same conditions every day, and you see an upward trend in your HRV, good, that's showing...it's supposedly showing our understanding, a good readiness to perform.

You can train hard, right? If you see a downward trend, which is like, if I travel internationally and now I've been on a plane for 24 hours, and then I show up in a hotel room, sleeping in an unfamiliar space, and now I'm jet lagged, I'll see three to four days of my HRV tanking. And they're like, "Well, maybe I'm not ready to perform today." But it is still just information. This is my problem with the fitness industries, because now people write articles because there's these trackers and, you know, you and I both have the Oura ring and there's a ton of other trackers out there. So, now people are making decisions without the full understanding of what's going on. So, people will wake up, check their Oura ring, see that they have low HRV today, and be like, "Well, guess I can't train."

And that's not how it's supposed to work. You're not supposed to take a data point and make a decision off of it. Or if I wake up and my HRV is higher than it's been the rest of the week, it doesn't just mean I'm going to have a great training session today. That's not how it works. This is one piece of a very complicated puzzle. So you're looking at HRV trend, not data points. You're looking at resting heart rate, both from a data point and trend standpoint. Then you're combining that with subjective measurements, like, "Have I had alcohol in the

last 24 hours? How did I sleep? How has my training been? Do I feel recovered? Am I sore?" Like, that's one of the reasons why, like, once again, Katie and I both have the Oura ring and I actually really like it.

I love seeing it. It very easily and very pretty graphs out the trends over time since that's what I'm looking for. That's one of the reasons I continue to use it. But if I am getting very serious about monitoring HRV, I actually use an app called HRV4Training. HRV, and then the number 4, not the word four, the number 4, and then training. And the reason why I do that is because it allows me to measure with a heart rate strap every morning, which is going to be way more accurate than something on a wrist or a finger. So, it allows me to track my HRV in the morning with a heart rate strap, which is more important to me, and it adds in a subjective questionnaire. So, instead of just giving you the data points of your trends over time, every single day, when you measure it, it then asks you, "How would you rate your sleep? How would you rate your training yesterday? Have you traveled in the last 24 hours? Have you had any alcohol in the last 24 hours?"

And now it starts to keep track of your subjective data along with the data it's collecting so that you could see even more data points and trends over time. So, although I think the Oura ring is probably the easiest thing, especially from a consumer standpoint, to start paying attention to some of these metrics. If you are going to get more serious into it, I suggest something like the HRV4Training, because then you could use a heart rate strap and then be a little more accurate and also add into subjective measurements as well. It's so cool that we have that available because I think it might've been like the Omegawave, or it might've been like one of the first things to measure HRV, like, over 10 years ago.

And I don't know the numbers, but I remember someone saying, it was like \$10,000 to get this device to start measuring your athletes' HRV. And now you could buy like HRV4Training, which is, like, I think it's like a \$5 or \$10 app on your iPhone. And if you don't have a heart rate strap, you could start by just using the camera sensor on your phone until you got a heart rate strap to just start from, just like how the Oura ring does through the photosensors. So, it's so cool that this information is available now for people to use at a very cost-effective option. But I just want people to be wary of it because there are those articles out there, which I think are very poor articles saying, "Oh, if you have low HRV, don't train that day. If you have HRV, that means you can go for a PR." And that's just not how it works. That's not what it was meant to be used for.

Katie: That is such a great explanation. I'll link to the HRV4Training in the show notes as well. That's a new one for me. I'm curious to check it out.

This episode is brought to you by Four Sigmatic. You've probably heard me talk about them before. I love this company that is known for its delicious superfood, mushroom elixirs, and especially mushroom coffees. I have been starting my day with their ground mushroom coffee with Lion's Mane for a long time. And I love how much it helps me focus and stay creative and productive the whole day. Mushroom coffee is more than just regular coffee. The addition of this incredible mushroom, Lion's Mane, supports productivity and creativity in a really unique way. This coffee also includes Chaga, which I've talked about on this podcast before. It's known as the king of mushrooms. And I love it as a functional mushroom because it supports whole-body health and its antioxidant properties give it a special ability to help support regular immune system function. One

question I get a lot when it comes to this is, does this coffee taste like mushrooms? And I can guarantee and want to make sure I explain, it tastes just like regular coffee, not at all like mushrooms. But you get the benefits of these incredible mushrooms that, like I said, they improve my whole day. Mushroom coffee is also gentle and easy on the gut. So I find I'm much less jittery than when I drink other types of coffee and there's no crash at the end. The reason I love Four Sigmatic so much, all of their products are organic, vegan, and gluten-free, and they test every single batch in a third-party lab to make sure it doesn't have any heavy metals or allergens, bad bacteria, yeast, mold, mycotoxins, pesticides, etc. So, you are getting not just really high-quality coffee but also that extra boost from these highly beneficial mushrooms. And I personally know the founder of Four Sigmatic and the standards that go into these products. They stand behind everything with 100% money-back guarantee. I worked out an exclusive offer just for podcast listeners to receive a 10% discount on any Four Sigmatic order. It's a perfect time to try all of their best-selling blends. Like I said, I love their mushroom coffee with Lion's Mane, also a really big fan of their Reishi Elixir and Reishi Cacao for at night to help me drift into really deep restful sleep. And they have other single and blended mushroom elixirs that I often incorporate during the day because they don't have caffeine but do give a boost of antioxidants and other beneficial compounds. To check all of it out, go to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and use the code Wellnessmama at checkout to save 10%.

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

I think we will have to end this episode just like we ended the last one with me saying, I think there's going to have to be another round one day, because you are such a wealth of knowledge. But for now, in the short term, a couple of questions as we wrap up. First of all, if people want to keep learning from you, they want to increase their movement variability and their strength and learn from you, where's the best place to start with that? And of course, I'll put links in the show notes.

Hunter: Okay. Well, I'll do one better than I did last time, because I believe when you asked this last time and when we talked about even CARs, we talked about them in more detail today, but briefly last time. I said, "Oh, you know, if you want to learn about CARs, there's a ton of information on the internet about it, just google it." And then I thought about that after. And I was like, "Why wouldn't I provide something for Katie's followers?" So, when a new client hires me and I teach them in person, I then give them a link to a video, which is me teaching it again, in case they forget any of the details. Because there's a lot of little nuances and

details. So the movements that I like people to be aware of. So, what I'll do is my introduction to CARs videos that I normally save for my clients, I'll give you access to that to share with your podcast listeners.

And that can be a starting point because I mean it when I say this, everyone should be doing CARs. It's the low-hanging fruit of mobility. It's the low-hanging fruit of joint health. I can't imagine something that has a better effort to reward ratio in a daily routine. So, I do believe everyone should have that and I want people to have access to it as soon. As you're ready to dive deeper, and you're saying, "All right, I feel better from the CARs alone, what would happen if I went a step further with this material?" I can't help but just plug myself, although there's practitioners all over the world, and I already gave you the link earlier to find someone local in your community. Like you said, a lot of people like to train from home. And if you're one of the people that like to train from home, I ask that you try Kinstretch with Hunter for at least a month because it's a monthly subscription, but there's no contract.

You can jump in and jump out as often, as frequently as you like. And within a couple months time there, you'll learn an outrageous amount of things about how to take care of your body better. So, CARs are done every day and then people plug in Kinstretch classes just as kind of training sessions throughout the week from the comfort of their own home. And the cool thing about the Kinstretch with Hunter platform, and this is relatively new because it's been in a private Facebook group for a couple of years. But as of very recently, it actually launched as my own platform. Meaning I have a new backend to my website. That's like a web app, it's a platform, and it's a whole community-driven platform. So, you go in, you have a login and you have a password. You have a classroom setting where all of your videos are and they're laid out in the order that you're supposed to watch them just to learn the material, learn the rules, learn all the stuff that I want people to know.

And then the classes are easily find-able, and then there's the community forum where people can interact with each other and everyone's helpful. And people get to ask questions. And I have a couple of my students in there that are answering questions on a daily basis. I'm in there on a daily basis, and everyone else helps each other as well. Because I have a lot of the people in the community or other instructors of what I teach around the world. But my favorite part about the community is that a lot of people really, especially in today's world, are getting disgusted with social media. And they're like, "Man, Facebook is a real drain. Instagram is a real drain." It's taking a toll on people's mental health, in my opinion. I created the equivalent of a social media platform, but off of social media. So, there's no other distractions, no other notifications. There's just notifications about the comments itself when people are interacting with your material in there, but there's no other notifications, no friend requests, no advertisements. So, you know, if you're on Facebook and whatever you said near your phone recently, now Facebook is advertising to you, which is a terrifying thing. That's not going to happen in my platform. It's basically a social media that's antisocial media space.

That allows you to come in and be with a community of people that are all training the same thing. And that's been the coolest thing because a lot of people have contacted me over the years saying, "I really want to learn your material, but I deleted my Facebook account and I refuse to come back on. Let me know when there's an option that's Facebook free." And I finally have that available for people. And even the people that aren't Facebook-free, switched over to using this, and they just love it. It's such a cool community space built around

people learning about how to take care of their bodies better. And I'm so proud of it. I'm so excited. And I know you're in there, Katie, and you've expressed how much you'd like it as well. And I'm so grateful for that.

So, in the show notes, I'll give Katie the link to the video for CARs, and if you guys do decide to go deeper, if you go to a hunterfitness.com and go to the members-only section, which is a very clear button, when you get to my website, you'll be able to read more information about frequently asked questions, how it all works, be able to sign up. If signups aren't open the day that you go, then you get on an email list and you get email notified the next time that members are allowed in. And I do things in an enrollment windows just to keep quality control as clean as possible, make sure that everyone's getting serviced and the attention that they deserve.

Katie: Awesome. And those links will definitely be in the show notes for any of you guys listening at wellnessmama.fm. And lastly, if I'm curious if there's a book or any number of books that have had a dramatic impact on your life, and if so, what they are and why?

Hunter: Oh, Katie. Okay. We'll talk for two more hours then. I don't know how to answer that question and be fair because I don't have a favorite book. I don't even know if I have a series of favorite books. I have like a favorite library. I have like a favorite book stand in my house. I have multiple cabinets of books and have them organized in, like, different categories of things, but overall, and I think you'll hear this answer a lot from people that do what I do, because we're all on the same page. But I think my favorite book that I've read like the last couple of years and I credit Dr. Andreo Spina for showing me this one, a lot with many of the other books that are my top list, I've definitely all gotten from him.

He's the person who created the FRC and Kinstretch curriculum that I travel to teach. So he's one of my colleagues and mentors, and is "Sapiens" by Yuval Noah Harari, because when it comes to doing what I do and I'm in the field of taking care of other humans, I believe that understanding how humans got to where we are today is one of the biggest factors in understanding how to take care of humans moving forward. As in, what stressors got us here, both from an evolutionary standpoint, from a physical standpoint, from a mental standpoint, how did our genome get stressed? Kind of should be understood if you're going to be someone in the care world of stressing people's current genome. So, when it comes down to, like, how I think people should move and what do I think people should be doing from a nutrition standpoint and recover standpoint and load management, stress management, I kind of run things through the lens, thanks to my learning from Dr. Spina through the lens of evolutionary biology. Like, how did we get here?

And you all know Harari did an incredible job. I think he's one of the best, best, really well thought out authors of our time. His book is "Sapiens" that I'm referencing. I think that is a must-read for all current humans. He has other books that are fascinating as well. I don't think any of them are as good as "Sapiens." "Sapiens" is the story of where...how we got to where we are from the past. "Homo Deus" is his story of where, based off that, where does he think what's going to happen over the next 20, 50, 100 years, which is fascinating, but, you know, it's all theory. And then his third book is on the current climate from the Trump administration to Brexit and everything that's going on in the world.

And all three books are worth a read. "Sapiens" was my favorite though. If you are in the health and fitness field and you like the idea of evolutionary biology and you are okay with a little more science, "The Story of The Human Body" by Daniel Lieberman, it's in the same category, it's evolutionary biology, but this is by an evolutionary biologist at Harvard. Daniel Lieberman is also...thanks to who I surround myself as colleagues and mentors. He's become another one of my favorite authors because it's just...it really is, the study of how humans got to where we are really does dictate how I think people should understand care moving forward. And so, Daniel Lieberman and you all know Harari are probably my two favorite authors in that regard. But really, Katie, besides that answer, which is obvious in my head, I'm literally looking at like three bookshelves in the room I'm sitting on right now. And I could have a conversation about any single book on here, how it influenced my thought process, what I took from it, what I didn't like about it. I'm big on reading to expand my understanding of our current world, our current climates, our other human people that we deal with and interact with on a regular basis. So, maybe that's a question to expand upon with a little more detail on a further episode, but I'll leave people that those two authors and those two books for now.

Katie: Perfect. Well, we'll just have to book around three at some point.

Hunter: I would love to.

Katie: Thank you so much for the time today and for all of your work. And I know we mentioned a lot of resources. You guys, those will all be linked at wellnessmama.fm so you can find them all in one place. Definitely, definitely start and check out the CARS video. It's so helpful for everyone, and, Hunter, thank you again.

Hunter: You're so welcome. I can't wait to come back already. I love the conversations with you, Katie, and I love supporting your community. I think what you've built is incredible. So, thank you.

Katie: And thank you as always for listening and for sharing your most valuable asset, 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.