



Episode 395: Gratitude and Silver Linings
of This Year - Thanksgiving Podcast

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is brought to you by Joovv Red Light Therapy. Red light therapy, also called photobiomodulation, has been a part of my life for many years. I discovered this years ago when doing some research and specifically found the benefits for hair, skin, thyroid, energy levels, many other things as well. And the reason for this is that our bodies need light. We think about food as the fuel for our bodies, and it is, but light is also a very important type of fuel for our bodies and for ourselves. And many of us get too much of certain types of light, like blue artificial indoor spectrums of light, and not enough of other types of light, like outdoor light, all the spectrum that come from the sun, and including red light, which is why I love having an option in my house where I can make sure I'm getting enough red light daily. It's done wonders for my wellness routine, and that's why I've made it such a priority. I've noticed a difference in my energy levels and in my skin when I use it regularly. And I wanted to talk to you about Joovv today specifically because they have long been the leader in red light therapy. But they've also just now come out with a new generation of devices that have upgrades that are really exciting. Their devices are sleeker, lighter, and with all of the same power of their original devices. But they've intensified their coverage area so you can stand as much as three times further away and still get the recommended dosage. I find this lets me work out or do other activities still close enough to the light to get the benefits. They've also upgraded their setup, so it's very quick and easy to build and can fit in almost any space, depending on your size requirements. A couple really cool features about these new devices. They have something called Recovery Plus Mode, which uses pulsing technology to give yourselves an extra boost after a tough workout or a stressful day. And I find that sleep is one of the most important aspects of health. And I have used red light therapy at night to help wind down for the day quite often. But their new devices have something called Ambient Mode, which is calmer lower intensity lights, especially beneficial at night, certainly more healthy than the bright blue light from many of our screens and in line with our natural circadian rhythms. For a limited time, Joovv is hooking up listeners of this podcast with an exclusive discount on a first order. And you can find out all the details by going to joovv.com/wellnessmama and using my code Wellnessmama on any qualifying order.

This podcast is sponsored by Wellnesse. my new personal care company that creates products that go beyond just safe and natural and contain beneficial ingredients that nourish your body from the outside in. Many "clean" products simply don't work. This is why I have spent the last decade researching and perfecting recipes for products that not only eliminate toxic chemicals but also have ingredients that work better than the conventional alternatives by your body from the outside in. I'm so excited to share these products with you and am especially proud of our whitening toothpaste which took years of formulating and dozens of rounds of tweaks to perfect. Our whitening toothpaste supports a healthy oral microbiome and strengthens tooth enamel naturally using ingredients such as hydroxyapatite, neem, and green tea to support tooth and gum health. Instead of fluoride, our formula contains green tea leaf extract, which is loaded with antioxidants. Plus, a phytochemical in green tea is shown to fight bacteria that leads to tooth decay. We combined this phytochemical with hydroxyapatite (a naturally-occurring mineral and main component of tooth enamel) to strengthen teeth and prevent cavities. Of course, fresh breath is paramount to good teeth brushing, and for that, we included peppermint leaf extract and neem. Neem prevents bacteria from sticking to teeth and turning into plaque. This protective measure means fewer bacteria, which leads to...fresher breath! Check out our whitening toothpaste and all of our products at Wellnesse.com. A tip – if you purchase a bundle or use auto-ship, you will receive a discount on both of those orders!

Katie: Hello and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com, that's Wellnesse with an E on the end. Make sure to check out our website if you are listening to this on Thanksgiving, as we have our biggest sale we've ever run site-wide on any orders over \$40, so check that out at wellnesse.com.

This is going to be a quick and kind of just high-level episode. I wanted to just spend a few minutes talking to you guys directly and saying happy Thanksgiving and focusing on some of the silver linings of this past year that I think has been...it's been a tough year for many people, and it's easy to focus on the negative. And certainly, memes abound of all the negative things of this year, but I also very much think it has been an incredible teaching year for many, many people. And if we are focused on it, there are so many lessons that we can learn from things that have happened this year, and that will benefit us going forward.

So I've talked about gratitude before, and I wanted to take this chance to do that myself and to call out some of the things to be grateful for from this year, the silver linings of this year. And I would love to hear yours, what's changed in your life as well. So please leave a comment on the show notes at wellnessmama.fm and let me know what you've noticed in what's changed in your life for the better this year. I'll also link to anything that I mentioned, blog posts, books, etc., in the show notes as well and I would love to continue the conversation there.

You've probably, if you have been around for a while on the podcast or on the blog, heard me mention our family motto, that you were made to do hard things, and I think this year has been a test of that in some really unique ways. Because certainly when we use that family motto, it's often related to things like cliff jumping as a family or some kind of athletic endeavor or even just some kind of project or challenge we're working on together, but I think that motto is even more and especially important at times like this.

And we weren't just made to do hard things like pole vaulting in our family, but we were made to endure hard things and be able to come out, not just okay but better on the other end. And so I think this year has been an incredible teacher of learning to do hard things for many, many of us and having to navigate that.

And I think gratitude has found when times are tougher. It's easy to be grateful when things are good and/or at least easier to be grateful when things are good. It's much harder to have gratitude when there's so much uncertainty. That's certainly psychologically one of the things that makes gratitude most difficult, is uncertainty and when things are kind of upside down as they have been this year.

And certainly not to minimize just how difficult this year has been for so many people in so many different ways and all of the things that we are facing, both societally and many people on an individual level. But I think this is also an incredible opportunity to learn gratitude because we don't learn gratitude...that lesson doesn't stick when things are easy. It sticks when things are hard.

A Latin quote that I love and I've mentioned here before, I plan to actually get tattooed on my wrist, is amor fati, which means love what is or love of fate basically. A reminder not just to be grateful when things are good, but to be grateful and actually be able to lean in and love even the bad things.

And I think this requires a curation of our mental energy and a conscious learning of how to switch our focus because I think, as humans, we are wired to be more easily focused on the negative, and there's a lot of psychology to back that idea. But even things, according to the National Science Foundation, I believe they said 80% of our thoughts are negative and 95% of our thoughts are repetitive.

So we often think that we are, you know, independent thinkers with free will, but so much of our thinking is just patterns and we have the ability to change and break those patterns, but it's not...it's simple, but not easy. And I think years like this are a great reminder and a great teacher of that if we let them be.

We also know that what we focus on becomes very powerful. And I think, at least from what I see on social media right now, many of us are...it's easy to focus on the negative right now and the fear and the uncertainty, but what we think about is part of what shapes our future and our reality and it's very powerful what we focus on.

And there's actually some science to back this up. There's something called experience-dependent neuroplasticity. And there's been a lot of emerging research about this, but the implications are really fascinating. And the basic crux of it is that our experiences and our mental focus, it changes our brain over time, not just mentally and how we think, but actually physically changes our brain. So think about that for a second. We have this capacity to change our brain through our experiences.

We used to think that our brain was pretty stable and unchangeable and we now know that very much is not the case. The beauty of that is this means that we have the ability to make conscious choices that change our brain for the better over time. And I think, like I said right now, years like this are a great, incredible opportunity to practice doing that.

So not to minimize certainly all of the difficult things going on, but I think there's nothing necessarily to be gained from dwelling on the negative, unless there's something we can do to improve those situations and making some mental changes and physical changes within our daily lives can help over time curate that mindset and using that experience-dependent neuroplasticity to actually change our brain for the better.

So that said, some of the positive things of this year that we can focus on and be grateful for and that I hope stick around even after things hopefully return to some different version of normal, I hope that some of these

things stick. I hope we don't go back to completely how we used to be. And I'm gonna share some of the ones that I've seen. I'd love to hear, like I said, things that you think have been the biggest benefits of this year.

One of the first ones is, on average, we are spending a lot more time as families and cooking more at home. So there's a lot more family dinners and family time going on. And we know that from the research done, it's healthier to eat at home. It's healthier to cook food just on average. All things being equal, meals prepared at home are typically less expensive and more nutrient-dense.

We also know that regular family time and family dinners are a really big predictor of happiness in families and also happiness in kids, especially. And so the fact that this is happening with more frequency is really amazing and it's something that I think a lot of people have known is beneficial and this year has been a really great time to have to choose that.

So some tips that I love for family dinner and family time to just help curate that experience. I've talked about this a little bit and I'll link to some blog posts I've shared about family time and how to focus on family dinners, but we love to say something we're grateful for. And this goes back to that experience-dependent neuroplasticity as well about what we focus on, we become. So anytime we can bring in reminders of gratitude, it helps to train the brain to look for things to be grateful for.

The human brain is so adept at finding what it focuses, and answering the questions it's given. And so asking it more often about things that you're grateful for is a great way to start having it look for the things you're grateful for. And that shift to the positive helps to kind of alleviate some of the negative self-talk that can be so easy to fall into this year.

So we love to, as a family, go around and say something that we're grateful for. This is great at breakfast or at dinner or really anytime we're together as a family. And we know from a lot of the research, there's so many health benefits to gratitude, and so I think this is an easy time to build it in.

And I think, like, there's actually, like, physical health benefits of gratitude as well. If you haven't seen it yet, there's a TED Talk by a psychologist, Shawn Achor, about gratitude and happiness and how they are the first step, not the end result. So basically by choosing to be grateful and happy, we are literally choosing better health as well. So just really fascinating.

There was a 2015 study published by the American Psychological Association that found that higher gratitude scores in subjects were related to better mood, better sleep, more positive health-promoting habits, less inflammation, and improved heart health. So kind of an attitude of gratitude is an antidote to external stressors. I think right now, especially it's important to find ways to work that in and to help our kids with that as well while they're still working on building their neural pathways.

Another fun habit to bring in to family dinner is to have a question to talk about. One thing I've started doing is keeping a list on my phone, just a note in my notes app of interesting and thought-provoking questions. And I love to ask these at family dinners or in the sauna, but just philosophical questions that lead to, like, a really good discussion. And as the kids have gotten older, this has become more and more fun.

I think these are also great to just have kind of some of them top of mind. So anytime you're in a group, if you want to avoid conversations turning to more stressful topics like politics, you can have these more philosophical questions that lead to really good discussions as well without getting into some of those more stressful things. I'll link to a couple of blog posts with a lot of these questions in the show notes in case you want to borrow some of mine.

Another important thing about family dinners and I am hearing from a lot of people that are happening more and more this year is getting kids involved. I've talked about this a lot in the past, and I've been a big proponent of a course called "Kids Cook Real Food," and that I will link to the show notes as well, but I think we often underestimate what our kids are capable of and often they love the feeling of autonomy and of being able to contribute that comes with cooking an entire meal from scratch. And I know, even as a kid myself, I remember the first time I did that and how fun it was.

But since we're all cooking at home a lot more, it's a great time to get the kids involved, maybe put them through something like "Kids Cook Real Food" so they have some basic kitchen skills to be able to safely prepare food, but let them be involved in the food culture of our homes. I'll put some resources in the show notes as well for that.

I also think that this year has been a good reminder to slow down. So often family dinners are rushed or there are activities before or after, and it's kind of a whirlwind and I've certainly been guilty of that at our house as well. I think this year has been a great time and a great reminder to slow down and to enjoy those times, to enjoy family dinners. And depending on your schedule and when kids are at school or virtual school or all of the different things happening right now, if dinner is too difficult, there's also always the option to do family breakfast.

We do many of these same things at breakfast, having the gratitude conversations or focusing on interesting questions or sometimes we'll watch TED Talks. I've mentioned that before as part of our homeschool routine, but we'll watch TED Talks either during breakfast or right after as a family.

But I think, like I said, I think this is one of the big changes. We're statistically seeing a lot. I mean, unfortunately, so many restaurants are closing, but with more and more people spending time at home and cooking family dinners, I think we're going to see benefit to the family unit from that. And that's something we

can all use at a time for focused family time and gratitude within our own families to benefit everyone in the family.

I think another silver lining of this is the shifting in work and school environments because I've talked before and done whole episodes about how the education system, for instance, hasn't largely changed in the last 100 years. In a lot of ways, work environments are the same, we're seeing more innovation there, but even with all of the benefits of technology, there was still resistance to a lot of ideas of virtual learning.

And this year has turned that entirely on its head. In fact, the curriculum that I had built for my kids, I had thought about turning it into a virtual curriculum. And I'll put the caveat that it's almost an uncurriculum because it frees parents from a lot of the extra stuff that doesn't need to be done. But my thought was that I would create a virtual version of that when my kids were older and done with school and make it available to other families, thinking that it would probably be at least a decade before virtual school was more widely accepted. And then this year happened and there was an almost overnight acceptance of virtual learning.

I know there are a lot of families still working on navigating this adjustment, and I'm still working on getting that program into a curriculum to share with other families. But the beauty of it is that there's now this widespread acceptance of virtual school, which certainly has its pros and cons, but I think long-term, if we can learn from that and take the benefits of that and use that to improve and adapt in-person learning as well, it's going to benefit our kids so much.

Some tips that I have for parents who are new to homeschooling or to virtual learning, I've read about this some more and I'll make sure that it is. I put some of those posts in the show notes as well, but I feel like a lot of parents, I'm hearing from you guys, that it's overwhelming trying to get kids to keep up with all of the virtual learning stuff that goes on.

And more and more, I'm hearing from parents, who are choosing to actually jump into entire homeschool curriculums instead with the idea that if their kids are gonna be learning from home anyway, that it makes more sense to be able to adapt and curate a curriculum for them instead of them just sitting on Zoom for hours and hours a day with their virtual school from their traditional school learning environment.

So my advice here is, I'll put some, like I said, some resources in the show notes, but lean into that and lean into the actual benefits of homeschooling beyond just that you get to be home. You don't have to have them spend eight hours a day or seven hours a day focused on schoolwork because, to kids, especially younger ages, everything is learning.

So lean into that and let them finish the basics and the minimum that they need to do, depending on the rules of your state, and then lean into the freedom of that and give them time to be outside or to delve into creative projects or to read or explore the things they want to do. There's such freedom in that. And I find

often that the kids adapt very easily to that change, and it's the parents who worry that they're not doing enough or that they need to entertain the kids more and the guilt that comes from that, that make it a difficult adjustment.

So like I said, I'll have more details on my actual curriculum soon if it's something that can be beneficial to your family, but in the meantime, think of the 80/20 principle and what are the 20% that it's gonna have the biggest result for your kid. Focus on those things, focus on the biggest needle movers, and then give the kids freedom to be bored.

I think boredom is such a gift to kids and one that many modern kids haven't gotten much of. So as another silver lining of this year, kids are at home more and they're bored more, and that's awesome because that's when creativity happens, that's when they learn their own versions of time management and to entertain themselves. And there are so many blessings in that if we can step away from the idea that we need to entertain them.

I think another benefit we're seeing of this is that kids are becoming more independent and returning to some of those innate childhood qualities, like creativity and critical thinking, because the schools in many areas have changed and many activities have been canceled. So I've seen many kids who used to go from activity to activity who are now in so much less of a rush because they're not going to all of these activities and they're getting to return to some of that carefree downtime of childhood and really, really enjoying that.

So I think, long-term, I think we're gonna still continue to see shifts here, but I love that so many families are open to new approaches, and even with all the struggles and difficulty navigating that come with that, I think this is gonna have a lot of positive effect for a lot of families long-term.

I also think we might see, hopefully, some health changes related to this year in that more people are at least aware and concerned about taking care of their health. I think this is a big deal because especially in the U.S., I found this statistic out recently, 88% of Americans have some marker of metabolic dysfunction. And that means only 12% of Americans don't have some form of metabolic dysfunction. And we know now enough from the research that having some kind of metabolic issue or chronic condition puts you at higher risk, not just for what's going on this year, but of any kind of complication from any kind of illness.

And it's been really interesting to watch people who are so concerned with avoiding the acute health things going on right now to the point of not interacting with people and staying home and taking, like, all of the measures that are recommended, who still...we will still do things that long-term are likely much more damaging to our health.

And what I mean by that is if we are consuming things or consuming foods, you know, or existing in a state of stress, where we're constantly in a sympathetic nervous system state, or not getting enough sleep, or eating

lots and lots of sugar, or doing, you know, habits that we know are overtly damaging to our health, like drinking too much or smoking, people are willing to still do those things, but are so concerned with avoiding this short-term risk, which certainly can be a risk.

I'm not trying to minimize that, but I'm hoping that from this year, we will see more of an understanding and awareness and focus on long-term health and metabolic flexibility and metabolic health because, at the end of the day, we still have problems like cancer, and heart disease, and diabetes, and autoimmune disease, and chronic conditions, and they are all still on the rise, probably more so with the stress of this year.

And I'm hoping that this will become an opportunity when there's more awareness about those because we all have, within our power, the ability to make changes, focus on some of those things. And I'll put some of my resources, including what's worked for me these past couple of years. I think the inner mental side of that is a much bigger piece than many people often realize, but my hope is that we're gonna see continued awareness of these health changes.

And we're learning things like, for instance, there was a study with vitamin D and it drastically reducing the chances of being hospitalized or dying, not just from this, but from any respiratory illness. We've known this for a long time, but so much drastically so that if this was a drug, it would become widely accepted almost overnight. And this is something we all have the ability to test for and to supplement with.

And it's a fact that soluble vitamin D is actually pre-hormone. It's vital for so many reactions in the body and, statistically, it's something many, many people are deficient in, especially in today's world. So I love that there is a rising awareness about things like that and I hope that, over time, we will continue to focus on things which are within our control that improve health, not just now, but, again, over the long-term, in many years in the future and that improve longevity.

And I hope that we're gonna continue to see that, that focus change. And like I said, I'll put some links in the show notes, but I love that we're having more conversations about metabolic health and some of these things that are not often as talked about.

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leader in red light therapy. But they've also just now come out with a new generation of devices that have upgrades that are really exciting. Their devices are sleeker, lighter, and with all of the same power of their original devices. But they've intensified their coverage area so you can stand as much as three times further away and still get the recommended dosage. I find this lets me work out or do other activities still close enough to the light to get the benefits. They've also upgraded their setup, so it's very quick and easy to build and can fit in almost any space, depending on your size requirements. A couple really cool features about these new devices. They have something called Recovery Plus Mode, which uses pulsing technology to give yourselves an extra boost after a tough workout or a stressful day. And I find that sleep is one of the most important aspects of health. And I have used red light therapy at night to help wind down for the day quite often. But their new devices have something called Ambient Mode, which is calmer lower intensity lights, especially beneficial at night, certainly more healthy than the bright blue light from many of our screens and in line with our natural circadian rhythms. For a limited time, Joovv is hooking up listeners of this podcast with an exclusive discount on a first order. And you can find out all the details by going to joovv.com/wellnessmama and using my code Wellnessmama on any qualifying order.

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I think we're also seeing a return to a focus on community. And I have probably talked so much about this, you guys might be tired of hearing me talk about it by now, but I think the importance of community can't be overstated. And I think this year is helping highlight that, both with many people being isolated from different parts of their community for so much of this year, and also now people finding ways to re-engage with community, whether it just be their family or very small local communities on a deeper level.

I think, long-term, this is a lesson I hope we remember because, as I've shared before, community is one of the strongest predictors of health and longevity, and I worry with isolation that that's going to have such long-term negative effects, but we love to hear about blue zones and areas of the world where people live to, like, a much riper old age in a higher concentration and we're so fascinated by them. And whole books have been

written about this. I've done an entire podcast on this. And I think the tendency of humans is to try to find the silver bullet or the thing that we think they're doing that we can just do that will help us live longer as well.

And there have been debates made, maybe it's that they eat more vegetables, maybe it's they drink red wine, maybe it's that they walk to dinner, maybe it's that they have less stress. I think maybe those are all parts of it. I think the one commonality that they all seem to have that I think is actually probably the greatest predictor of their longevity is the focus on community. Many of these areas, they have very, very strong local communities, family units, groups that get together regularly, and we know from the scientific research just how vital that is for health.

And so I hope that this year will be a wonderful reminder of that, and that to whatever degree possible and with our own local area, we can curate these small communities and these strong relationships that are, in many ways, one of the strongest predictors of health from any illness.

I know in our family, we've done that, not just with our own kids in our own family unit, which has been great being home this year, much of my travel was canceled, so I've been really able to just lean in and spend that really quality time with my kids. But we've also curated a small local community. Even as things were shut down, finding a group of families that we felt safe with and could interact with regularly and share activities with. And so that's things like sauna, or exercise, or just spending time together, letting the kids play, or having a bonfire outside, whatever it was. And that has been a really special gift of this year as well.

So my encouragement is to, whatever degree you're able and willing, to find and build local communities and to have those touchpoints. I think that's gonna be continually important, not just this year, but going forward. And I think if we can use this year as a reminder and an impetus to switch to a focus on metabolic health, and on community, and on family time, and on gratitude, that, long-term, it's gonna have such a positive benefit for so many of us, even though it's relatively acutely difficult for so many right now.

And like I said, some ways to do that. If you have families nearby, curate just meals, shared meals, or shared experiences, or playing games, being outside, just finding ways to interact and build those relationships.

Another fun thing that seems to go in waves, but I'm hearing more and more that I think is a great silver lining of this year is many people are finding new ways to be creative and learn new things. Because so many of our previous distractions have been canceled, there aren't as many activities and things to run around to, and so spending more time at home, many of us are having to find ways to entertain ourselves at home.

And I have been hearing from so many people who have read so much more this year, who have taken up new hobbies. I know for me, I've adopted a whole new workout regimen as a hobby and it's been absolutely incredible to see the changes in my body and strength every...just week to week from that and then the

community that comes along with that, but people taking on new hobbies and new activities, and I think this is a great time to continue learning.

And like I said, I don't want to discount the struggles of this year as well. And certainly, I've run into quite a few of those myself and I've shared a little bit before, but this year brought up a lot of things that I thought I had dealt with and was a wonderful opportunity to make sure I actually had.

And one of the first being, in March, in those first few weeks of lockdown, I found myself very, very angry and I couldn't figure out why at first. I was almost, like, viscerally enraged, and I didn't feel like eating. I was working out a ton and I just felt like I was in a fight. What I finally realized was that part of my past trauma and my own struggles, the hardest part of that for me was the helplessness and the feeling out of control. And so because of that, I had developed all these elaborate systems to not feel helpless and to be able to be in control of all the variables in my life.

And then this big thing came along that I was not able to control and it just re-triggered all of those feelings of helplessness. But the beauty of that is, as previous podcast guest Aaron Alexander said, you know, never waste a trigger. It was a beautiful opportunity to be aware of that and then to slowly get to work through that.

And so I think this year, in that sense, has been, like I mentioned a little in the beginning, one of my greatest teachers and it's given me the opportunity to work through a lot of things personally and in relationships in my life. And I think that's been maybe a recurring theme for many of us as well. And I'll share some of the tools that have been helpful to me in the show notes, but I think also there's such an individualized aspect of this, but my encouragement is just not to run away from those things, to find whatever the tools are that are going to help you process them and use them as an opportunity for growth rather than run away.

On a small kind of funny level, one thing that I've worked through this year recently I'm so grateful for, I was afraid to be upside down, relatively, like, terrified actually ever since having kids. And I suspect part of this is the vestibular changes that come along with pregnancy and childbirth, but I think it also, for me, went back to that need to be in control and not feeling like I was in control, that I was upside down. And this was a relatively small thing, I probably could have existed just fine without having to be upside down, except for many of the activities my kids like doing involve being upside down.

And this is something that, in the past couple of weeks, I've actually been able to entirely let go of. And the reason I bring it up is I think the processing of that is representative of something that's helpful with processing anything like a lot of the stuff that many of us are facing after years like this. And one of the lessons I learned in that that seems very simple but difficult to apply and extremely helpful to me was learning to feel the emotion rather than resist it and then thanking it versus fighting it.

There's a book called "The Untethered Soul" that talks a lot about this and it gives some helpful, specific advice. But I just had to start consciously learning to change my mindset. That when I would feel some of these emotions come up, rather than resist them or label them as bad or try to change them, I would lean into them, feel them, try to figure out maybe where they were coming from, what they were trying to teach me.

And then often in that being able to recognize that this emotion or this fear or this, whatever it was, had served a purpose at some point in my life. It had kept me safe and it helped me get through a hard time, whatever it was, and so I could thank the emotion versus fighting it and let it go. And that's been an incredible thing to have so many opportunities this year to do that. I might do an entire podcast about that at some point with one of the therapists I work with.

Another thing that's been helpful to me in that is something called combo. And I will do a podcast specifically about this soon and explain what it is. It's definitely one of the more obscure things I've ever done in the name of health. And I think I got a lot of feedback on Instagram because I posted a picture of it one time and said it was the hardest thing I've ever done in the name of health, and that remains true. So I'll definitely share more about that soon in an upcoming podcast episode.

But going forward, my encouragement would be to lean into the gratitude and to balance when it comes to self-development the idea of goals and gratitude. So being content and happy with where we are, even if it's not where we thought things would be or how we thought things would go, but also having some goals to focus on that are realistic and not too many. I find two to three things to focus on is about the maximum that it seems possible to effectively accomplish. So I like to have, every month, two to three goals that I'm focused on and then that continual reminder and focus of gratitude.

I also just offer to loop back to the beginning of this episode the idea of that experience-dependent neuroplasticity and our ability to change our brain by consciously curating and changing our thoughts. My encouragement is, going forward, to do this by asking better questions, challenging our assumptions, and then asking the question, what if I did the opposite?

And I'll share in a blog post more about these specific things soon, but those were things that were really helpful to me. Realizing I mentioned this in passing, but the questions that we ask our mind will answer, our subconscious will answer. So if we ask questions, like why is this so hard or why am I not better at this, or why is this year so awful, our brain is going to answer those questions. And if we ask better questions, our brain will work to answer those as well. So if we ask, what am I grateful for or why is this year so wonderful, I think that's a great way to start making that shift in mental focus.

I also love the idea of challenging assumptions. And I'll do a different episode entirely about this, but the idea being anytime we are 100% sure of something, there's probably at least one part of it that we're not correct about. So I love having that. I actually make a spreadsheet of things that I believe I'm relatively certain about and I challenge those things constantly because I feel like this is an important tool for personal development.

And then lastly, when we get stuck in a pattern or a habit, I love to ask what if I did the opposite and to build from that. So, again, more about all of those things coming soon, but my encouragement remains just to try to find and focus on the silver linings, the gratitude, all of the good things going on this year, even though there are some tough things going on as well.

And I would love to hear from you how you are doing that. Please weigh in at the show notes at wellnessmama.fm, or reach out to me on social media. And I hope that you and your family are having a wonderful Thanksgiving with lots of community wherever you are, however that looks this year. I am grateful and thankful for you, for you being part of this community, and I hope that you have a wonderful Thanksgiving and weekend with your family.

And as always, thank you for listening, for sharing your most valuable resource, your time, with me today. 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.