



Episode 396: A Better Way to Connect With Small, Sustainable Farms, and Agriculture With Laef

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is sponsored by Hiya chewable kids vitamins. It's a new company I found that my kids are extremely excited about. Do you know that most typical children's vitamins are essentially just candy in disguise? Many have as much as two teaspoons of sugar, along with some food dyes, some other unhealthy chemicals, or gummy junk that kids should probably never eat as a dentist would probably agree with. Hiya is the complete opposite. It fills the most common gaps in children's diets with full-body nourishment and a yummy taste they love without any of that junk. While most children's vitamins might contain as much as 5 grams of sugar, it can cause a variety of health issues. Hiya has created a zero sugar, zero gummy, junk-free vitamin that tastes great, and as my kids will attest, is delicious. It's perfect even for picky eaters. Also importantly, it's manufactured in the U.S. with globally sourced ingredients, each selected and screened for optimal bioavailability and absorption. What's cool is they send us to your door on the pediatrician recommended schedule. And the first month, you get a reusable glass bottle, that you can personalize with stickers. So every month thereafter, they send a no plastic refill pouch, which means it isn't just good for your kids, it's also good for the environment, and it reduces waste. My kids love the little glass jar that the vitamins are in and I love how it's low waste. You can find out all about them, and their sourcing, and the many benefits by going to hiyahealth.com/wellnessmama

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. If you haven't checked it out, please do. It's my new line of personal care products, including hair care, and toothpaste, and hand sanitizer that nourish your body from the outside in and don't contain any harmful ingredients or harsh detergents to strip away the things the body naturally needs.

This episode is about a way to connect people directly with their local food economies to save money, to get more nutritious food, and a better way to support local farmers and providers of local food. I'm here with Matthew, who's the co-founder of Laef, which is L-A-E-F. It's a Local Agriculture Expansion Foundation, which

is a free payment and e-commerce platform that supports small sustainable farms to help them connect and transact with their local communities. And I met him recently and really wanted to share him with you guys because I think this tool is really invaluable and helpful for farmers, helps them connect directly with us as consumers, and also is beneficial to us as well. The goal is to help connect people locally with their small sustainable farms without the overhead or the middlemen. So it benefits both the consumer and the farmer. And I think right now especially, it's a really good time to find and connect with local food providers with a lot of the uncertainty going on right now. And this also supports small businesses in our own areas, which as the economy still struggles is a really important thing that we can all do since we all have to eat anyway.

Matthew and his wife, who is the co-founder, they want local personal food to be a viable option for us as consumers and as a viable business for small farmers. I think we're seeing more and more people move toward this type of model. Definitely give it a listen. Recommend it to your local farmers and food producers. It can help them out so much. And we also, stay tuned at the end, we touch on things like entrepreneurship and running a business in a time like now, and also parenting, and an unusual hobby Matthew has, which is parkour, and how this can actually relate to moms. So, a very fact-packed episode I know that you will enjoy as much as I did. So let's jump in. Matthew, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Matthew: Hey, thanks for having me. it's good to hear your voice again.

Katie: Oh, likewise. And I met you earlier this year and knew that I wanted to have you on and to chat because the work you're doing is amazing and supports local farmers. And so I knew I wanted to have you on and share that with my audience, both members of my audience who are involved in local agriculture in some way and also many who support local agriculture, in some way, and could bring this to local farm. So, before we go deep on this, kind of, for anyone listening, give us an overview of what LAEF is and why it's amazing.

Matthew: Yeah, absolutely. So, the sort of brief history to now is I've been involved in local food with my wife for about 10 years and sort of born out of a combination of my frustration with kind of the local food system or lack thereof, and then also kind of my deep expertise in e-commerce and custom software development. So LAEF is a payments and e-commerce platform for small local farmers, that's absolutely free to them. We provide them with a marketplace online where people can come and find them, near where they live. And we also provide them an app for their phone and a card reader that uses all the modern technologies, Bluetooth, contactless pay, all of that. And, you know, it's unsurprising, right, that technology is not something that farmers index for very highly, and quite frankly, they shouldn't. And so we're kind of taking, which some of the listeners may be familiar with the community-supported agriculture model, CSA, which is where you sort of pay upfront and then your farmer grows the food, and then you get a share. We're sort of taking it one step further to where on our platform, it's completely free to the farmer. They don't pay credit card, transacting fees, or any of that. We had a small 4% plus 30 cent fee onto every order, which to me, right, you know, a few cents on order of tomatoes doesn't matter much to me, but it adds up a lot to the farmer whose margins are quite thin. So, we're really, really excited for the farms that we've partnered with and we're excited to kind of grow at this point, which is, you know, one of the things I'm most excited about in sort of getting the word out.

Katie: Absolutely. And with all of the chaos that has been this year, I know that, like, food and supply chain are a couple of things that there's some uncertainty about right now. And I've always been a big proponent of local agriculture anyway of having backyard gardens and supporting local farmers. And I feel like this is even more important, probably more important than it ever has been for us right now. So I love that you guys are making it very practical, and tangible, and helping connect people with agriculture in their local communities. And I mean, you touched on it a little bit, but I know this is also a passion for you. Let's talk a little bit about why local agriculture is so important, in general, but then also, especially right now.

Matthew: Yeah, no, totally. So, my wife and I have been married for about 10 years. In early on in our marriage, we were unsure if we were gonna have children, like if it was going to be possible. And my wife is a dietician, has a master's degree in functional medicine. And through kind of doing her own research and experimentation on herself, the punchline to that story is we have two children now. And local food, which is far more nutritious, depending on how it's grown, was a huge part of that. And so, by getting kind of plugged into that community, it's just something that feels so good to the soul, right? You have these people who have made a livelihood out of feeding and healing other people, and to get to know their names, and shake their hands, and sort of have that connection back into the seasons and, like, the earth around you, as part of like a very tight, you know, honest community is something that's been fantastic. And to get to meet those people and donate my time to work the booth at the farmers' market and all of that, and kind of be confronted with the frustrations and the problems that they have, right, like farmers are not really social media influencers. They're not web developers, yet there's a weird pressure for them to kind of do those things to be able to do marketing or to reach people online. And now especially with COVID, you know, we were like, "Oh man, we've gotta accelerate this." Whatever we have to do to get this live for our farmers, we have to do it because, you know, with farmer's market just being one venue that they interact with the community being less of a thing or being more uncertain, a lot of small farmers are hurting.

And then we saw, you know, the food scares earlier this year. You know, it was interesting, like, supermarket shelves are completely bare. And I just text my farmer and say, "Hey, can I pick up a quarter of a pig this weekend or, you know, I'm running low on onions or something? Do you still have some stored away?" And not having that fear, right, because I'm so connected to my food was something that I was, like, man, more people want this, right? And in speaking to friends and neighbors, and that sort of thing, they say, "Oh, my gosh, I had no idea that people grow food here." And you know, for me, I'm like, "Wow, that's a problem," right? I think the market is really untapped. A lot of people don't know how much local food is actually grown around them because it may surprise people but farmers market is not often the place where the best and most local food gets transacted.

Katie: Yeah, that's such a great point. And for all of the difficulties of this year, I do hope that we can focus on some of those silver linings, like you mentioned, and that some things we'll stick around because I'm seeing that in our area, much more relationship between people and their local food sources. In general, people are eating out less and seem to be cooking together as families more or very small groups, which I love. I love that it's led to more community like that. And you mentioned that you have two kids now. I think another aspect of this, that's so important is our kids growing up understanding where their food comes from and understanding

the connection with nature, and with animals, and with the food supply versus thinking that food just comes from a grocery store and is always available. And that's such a beautiful thing that they can see when you get plugged into these local food economies.

Matthew: Absolutely. And, you know, our summer this year has been filled with Saturday mornings, as we drive down just south of town to a little farm called Frost Livestock. And we go see Sam. Sam's our farmer. And the kids get out of the car, and they run over, and they see the chickens, and help collect eggs. And it's just such a life-giving experience to have your children so connected to the food that they eat and know actually what it looks like when it comes out of the ground and have, like, met the people that nourish their bodies. And, you know, to build friendships within that community, I think, it's something that just doesn't exist many other places, right? When you have that community that is so born out of, like, a basic human necessity and to know that our support provides a way of life for somebody else who's doing such great work like that, it's just fantastic.

Katie: Absolutely. And right now, especially also with all the talk of the economy and small businesses being hit so much. This is also a great way to support local small businesses and to keep your local economy strong. Let's talk a little bit about how to find these local farmers and butchers. And I mean, there's truly I found endless options where we are from. There's caveman, Tony near us, who brings the meat, and there's a local farmer by a mom who has a CSA that grew because of COVID. Before that, I think she was at a farmer's market. And then when those shutdown, she opened a CSA that I think has become really beneficial for her and certainly for all of us who now just have produce show up in our neighborhood. But for somebody who is new to the local food economy, what are some great ways to start finding it? Because you mentioned they're not all just at farmer's markets. And I totally agree. How can we start finding these local farmers and resources that may not have a website or a huge online presence?

Matthew: Yeah, that's a great question. We've lived in several different cities kind of in the last 10 years. And eventually, you get really good at sussing it out, right? Like, we participate in a herd share for goat milk. And the way that we got into that herd shares, you go to the farmers market and you find somebody that looks like they know what they're doing, and you're like, "Hey, buddy, where do you get the goat milk?" And they're like, "Oh, here's Anne's phone number." She meets at the Safeway parking lot on Wednesday at 2:00 and it's like the local food drug deal because so much of this stuff again, doesn't happen at the farmers market. But you know, this is really one of the things that LAEF is looking to help solve. I think the best strategy today is to go to either the farmers market or our local co-op if you happen to have it and that sort of thing. And if you can get connected with one farm, in particular, all farmers know about six other people that are all of quality, essentially, that they also buy food from. That's the other thing I think is so interesting is, it really is sort of like a network and everybody, you know, is so interconnected. And there's so little kind of rivalry or competition between the farms is that, you know, some of the CSAs that we participated in this year, we literally only found through other farmers that recommended them. And so, kind of how we've grown LAEF, where we've just started it here in Colorado Springs, Colorado, has been through selecting a few farms that we knew of and then them telling other farms essentially about it. And so, you know, I think the biggest opportunity here is, you know, if we can connect with people who are kind of embedded into their local food systems where they live, and we can find those farmers, that we can help, it kind of spreads like wildfire, right?

Like, I would say, in just a one-block radius from our house. Now, there are 10 families that are now doing CSA's just from talking to us, right? So we have extra food, we give it to them because I signed up for an unreasonable number of CSAs this year. And it's teachers, it's grandparents, it's all sorts of people who get connected through other people. And so, you know, the short answer to your question is, it's actually hard to find these things. I think your best bet is to go through like a co-op or a farmers market and start talking to people. And our hope with LAEF is to make it so that there is sort of, like, an online repository of small farms, you know, that are of quality because this is the other thing too is some of the farmer's markets have really low standards, kind of the food producers that are in there. Some of them aren't even really growing the food themselves. They're shipping it in and then selling it, and no one kind of asks. And if you're not well acquainted with the local area, you might not know the difference. And so that's one of the things that we're really stringent on with LAEF is we really only are taking in farmers who actually sell what they grow there locally. And I think that that's another big piece to this is kind of, how do you know the quality of the food that you're getting?

Katie: Yeah, for sure. And that's another great aspect of this. I know a lot of people listening have families. And I have found, especially this year, the budget side of this is pretty incredible as well because working with local, like, farmers and local, you know, people who have different types of meat and seafood where we live, we've actually saved money and are getting much higher quality food. And that's another benefit, like you touched on already. But the nutritional quality of food that you get from your local environment is so much higher and whether it's local beekeepers and local, like I mentioned fishermen and little just micro-farms. And so I've built for our family a seasonal meal plan that rotates based on the seasonality of food, especially produce. And then we build around those and it saves so much money over time as well. And like we mentioned with COVID, the beauty of this, you mentioned you joined a lot of CSAs, I did the same thing. Any CSA I heard of, I just said, "Absolutely, I'll sign up for it." And build the meal plans around those, but eating so much more seasonally and saving money that way. And I've seen that change happen in our whole community, in our neighborhood, not just even people who are focused on the health side. It's been a beautiful transition to watch.

Matthew: Yeah, absolutely. And it's such a fun and interesting thing to be so, like, reconnected with the earth and with the seasons, you know. The supermarket has, you know, somehow magically, definitely no problems or cost there, has all the food all the time. And so, you're sort of living this gray homogenous food life. But when you're so connected to this food that tastes better because it wasn't picked too early and wasn't shipped across the world, and is so much more nutritionally dense, boy, I mean, that is like the magic of it. When we have people over for dinner or something like that, it's always, "Oh my gosh, like, why is this food so good?" And it's like, "Well, it was grown right here. It tastes different. It's better for you." And, you know, like you said, planning your meal plan seasonally, it's kind of fun, and it does save money. Because, you know, you're dropping all of that additional cost. And that's the other thing too, that we're looking at with LAEF is, to us, it's very important that the farmer and the person actually connect. So, there are other kind of platforms out there that we've personally tried and I've talked to farmers about their experience with where they sort of separate the farmer and the person, again, where you kind of sign up for a share. The intermediary company sort of dictates to the farmer what they ought to grow based on the food preferences of the people. And then they take it, you know, a 7% to 12% cut on top of a 3% fee for all of the credit card processing. Well, that's 10

to 15%. It's like all the margin in small farming. And it's not sustainable. And I think it promotes bad habits as a consumer because it's more concerned around, you know, what do I want, not what grows. And it's very hard on the farmer to not be able to sort of diversify their crop or grow the thing that they're really good at. And so, we're really trying to stay away from that model.

And again, I think the personal aspect of this, a lot of the farmers that we work with, you know, we say, like, "Why do you do this, right? Like, this is kind of a crazy business to do from a just a strictly business sense." And it always comes back to the same thing. They do it for the people. They do it for those Saturday mornings, and the people roll up with their kids. And they get out and you shoot the breeze for 15 minutes, and pick up your giant basket of vegetables, and that's why they do it. They love feeding people. And I think that any kind of platform that gets in the way of that and sort of dictates something in the middle is sort of doing a disservice. And it's really not a sustainable model. I mean, even the farmers market itself, a lot of the farmers markets take 5% or more of the gross sales. And, again, it's really hard for a farm to pick up a bunch of food, not know if they're gonna sell it. So spoilage is quite high. And then to give away 5% of the gross. That's why a lot of the some of the best farms that, you know, we do our CSAs with, they all go through the same cycle. They show up at the farmers market, connected with their community. They start a CSA, and then they leave the farmers market. So I would say, four out of the five farms that we're doing a CSA with right now actually aren't at the farmers market are growing some of the best food with some of the best growing practices. It's absolutely incredible.

Katie: And I know this is also part of a big long-term strategy for you related to local food and helping farmers even more. So, walk through the vision of where this is headed and what long-term, what you hope to accomplish.

Matthew: Yeah, so today, right, we've got the seedling, no pun intended, of the idea where we have an e-commerce platform, where we can onboard the farmer, free to them. And we have the payment app so that they can transact in-person. And so, what we're really doing is we're kind of aggregating these farms that have good practices, right? So, we're doing the curation aspect of it, as that continues to grow because we can do this anywhere. We're doing it where we live right now because that's a great place to start. But, you know, to any anybody listening, wherever you are, in the U.S., LAEF can be there. And so, as we continue to grow that network out, I think of it as sort of a digital co-op, where we have the potential moving into the future to essentially allow you to buy in just like you would to a CSA, to purchase credit ahead of time, and then spend it over time. And that'll essentially allow us to give the farmers the funds to support their initial growing season. So, what starts out as a transactional platform moves more into a co-op, which then on the grander scale across the nation, then really turns into the ability for us to facilitate things like loans to people who want to start small farms. I think that that's the big vision for me is anybody, you know... Imagine you're a couple in San Francisco who are heavily in the tech sector and just decide one day, "I give up. Like, this is not the way I want to live," and they want to move out to a smaller town, and start a farm on a couple of acres, that should be viable for them.

And if we can take away the platform and marketing side of things, and allow them to pop in and essentially fulfill the supply for an existing demand, that suddenly becomes a viable way of life again. And even better if

we can help support by providing owns and technology and processes that can help them get the best, you know, fighting chance to jump their new farm off the ground. And so, that's sort of, like, our long-term vision of this so we really want to make small farming viable again for anybody because I really truly believe that the demand is massively there. We think of ourselves as matchmakers, not middlemen. And I think that that's the recipe for success.

Katie: So how can any of us who are listening, how can we help get this to our local farmers? Is there a process for any of us who have relationships with these local people within our own food economies, how to best get this to them?

Matthew: Yeah. So LAEF is the name of the... This stands for Local Agriculture Expansion Foundation. And you can go to laef.io to go to our website or if you have a farmer and you wanna send them a link to find out more about kind of exactly what we're doing from their perspective. We also have freethefarmers.com, which will take you right to a landing page that kind of explains our model from the farmer's perspective and, you know, whether you can connect us on their behalf or you send it to a farmer, you can contact us right through our website, or my email, which is matthew@laef.io. And we'd love to help onboard them. Again, I think this is the part that makes me, you know, sleep well at night is knowing that we can onboard farms and that this is free for them to use. And I think that that's the way it should be. This should be a no brainer. We don't discourage anyone from using any other platform or selling in any other venue. We just simply wanna want to provide another option for free to farmers to help them succeed.

Katie: I love that. And I love that it helps make local food so much easier because I think, like, we've talked about already so much in this episode, I think that's the direction we all need to move both food security for nutritionally, for, you know, budget reasons. There's just so many benefits to local food, which I think are all being brought to light and really highlighted right now. And I love that you guys are doing this in a farmer-friendly way because like you explained, I think there's a lot of options out there. And a lot of them are not necessarily beneficial for the farmer or even for the customer either. And so to have one that benefits everybody like this and that makes local food easier is incredible. And I'm so grateful that you guys are spearheading this and helping bring this to local farms.

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kids, it's also good for the environment, and it reduces waste. My kids love the little glass jar that the vitamins are in and I love how it's low waste. You can find out all about them, and their sourcing, and the many benefits by going to hiyahealth.com/wellnessmama

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To switch gears a little bit, there's a few questions I love to also ask. The first one is somewhat selfish, because I'm always looking for new books, but if there is a book or a number of books that have had a dramatic impact on your life, and if so, what they are and why.

Matthew: Yeah. So, whenever someone asked me, like, I should just read a book that you've read. I always go back to "Thinking, Fast and Slow" by Daniel Kahneman. I don't know if you've seen this book. But he talks about... It's all about the sort of, like, system 1 and system 2 way of thinking. Your system 1 is kind of your fast, reactionary kind of thinking where I say 2 plus 2, you say 4. Your sort of deeper system 2 thinking is the one that kind of resides under your consciousness. And with the reason that that has been so impactful for me is it's really shaped the way that I think about myself and how I make decisions because being so heavily involved in e-commerce and custom software development, and marketing, and all this sort of thing, it's really about, how do I convince somebody to believe something, right, and then to take action. And this idea of the kind of experiencing versus remembering self is something that's been, like, really impactful, like, in my life is when I prioritize how to spend my time or what to do on a vacation, or how I want to sort of live my life. I realize there is the me now who experiences the world around me and there is the portion of me that will remember something that happened, right? So, like, an example of this might be, you know, me right now doesn't wanna spend the time to do something like to go and pick up my shirt at the farm, right? Maybe it's like a busy Saturday or something, remembering self, who will have that memory of going, and the chickens being there, and talking to Sam, and all of that will very heavily benefit from that. And so, as I sort of like try to navigate the payoff of effort in LAEF, that concept of sort of there being two versions of myself, one that does the hard thing now and the version of me that benefits from it later, has been really big for me.

Katie: That's a great suggestion. I don't think anybody recommended that one. But I echo and I love that. And you brought up another topic that I would love to touch on briefly, which is entrepreneurship, especially right

now in a relatively rapidly changing environment, especially online. And quite a few people, a relatively large percentage of listeners are entrepreneurs in some form. So I'd love to hear any advice that you have. I know that there's so many different types of entrepreneurs, but just like business and entrepreneurship related advice in a rapidly changing business culture, like we have right now.

Matthew: Yeah, no, I think a piece of advice that I typically give that I think is more true now than ever, is people are very bad at quitting things. And I think that quitting things, especially in such a volatile environment right now is actually the most advantageous thing that you can do. And when I say quit things, I mean, the moment you realize that the thing that you're working on is not gonna work out, pivot. And, you know, I have been on, you know, the upswing of a lot of the things that have happened as a result of COVID. It's opened up a lot of opportunity in me being an e-commerce and connected to local food and that sort of thing. But even LAEF itself has pivoted a lot. When we started coming into this year, we were dead sure that we were gonna focus on the payment app portion first. We were, "Oh, yes, we will totally be able to transact credit cards in-person. The world will be a definitely a stable place, just like it was last year. Not so much. Right? So, we pivoted super hard and prioritized the e-commerce platform first. And I think being able to have strongly held beliefs and opinions but holding them loosely and letting yourself adapt to the new information around you, and being willing to let go of your plans or your ideas or your dreams, and that sort of thing to be able to recontextualize them is the most important thing, especially now.

Katie: I definitely agree. Okay. So another topic, we're gonna just jump around a little bit right now. Having gotten to meet you in-person, you also have expertise in an area that very few people I feel like at least few people I know have expertise in. And that is Parkour. So, just for my own curiosity, I'll love to know a little bit more about how you got into that for one. And then I heard you explaining this to some other people, along with kind of all the benefits that come along with it, which I had never considered. So, for anybody who's not familiar, tell us what Parkour is and how you got into that.

Matthew: Yeah, of course. So, I was not very athletic, growing up, and then somewhere around high school, I got very interested in diving. And the reason I got interested in diving was, like, the mental aspect of it, as well as the physical benefits, but really the mental aspect. And Parkour at its core, it is essentially mental training that manifests itself physically. So, I was drawn to Parkour for that. I got into it very heavily in college, met a couple of guys, started a team, this is a thing. And we ended up getting a small sponsorship and doing a Red Bull competition and all of this fun stuff. And really, when I talk about training Parkour, if you can imagine a circle, and that circle is your mental ability to convince yourself to do something that seems scary, right, that maybe it's jumping a distance over a gap, right? So Parkour is very physical. When I say Parkour, people think out of that episode of "The Office," which is quite funny, or like "Casino Royale," the James Bond film where the guys jumping through this construction site, and it looks very flashy and dangerous. But really, what it's all about is your physical capabilities are circle much larger than your mental capabilities. So, the safe way to sort of train Parkour is to push yourself to do something that physically you definitely can do, but mentally is quite tough. And so, when I would train back in college when I was first starting this, I would do...There was a staircase at Purdue, where I went to university.

And it went down and at the top, there was a concrete ledge on either side. And the jump was tiny, 6feet, maybe. I could literally just fall across and grab the other side. So this jump is quite easy. But as the staircase goes down and, of course, the drop gets bigger, and so you would do the jump, take a half step to the left, do the jump again, take a half step to the left. And eventually, somewhere along the way, you sort of hit at that breaking point where it becomes scary. Like, it's not so much dangerous because it's very easy. And again, there's a million different things that you could do to get across, but it changes in your mind. And so, the reason that I have stuck with Parkour for the last 10 years is that mental game. It is I think very directly related to entrepreneurship. And so far as that mental toughness and ability to control my emotions and to be able to push myself to do something, once I've decided to do it, that directly translates. And I have had the wonderful experience of coaching hundreds of people, especially while I was at university. That was my first business was teaching Parkour. Tons of people to train and do acrobatics, like backflips, and all of that, but really what I'm doing is I'm coaching them mentally, essentially. And that is why I love Parkour so much.

Katie: That's so cool. And I think about that, like, for our kids as well. I've interviewed so many guests who have talked about, like, the importance of that for psychological development and for vestibular development, and how kids doing things like running so fast, their legs almost can't carry them, or climbing trees, or jumping off of things. We have been protecting kids more and more from those activities, but they actually needed them for proper, like, brain development. And when we keep from those activities, they get to adulthood without that full range of that mental aspect that they need. I know also for me, after having kids, I feel like my vestibular system changed quite a bit. And so now I have this irrational fear of being upside down if I'm not in control. So, I can do a handstand on my own, but if someone, like, picked me up, if I had to, like, hang upside down, it makes me completely freak out. So any baby steps selfishly on how I can mentally work through that because it's definitely not a physical ability thing at this point. It's a mental, my brain goes into a you're going to die scenario, which is completely illogical.

Matthew: Yeah, no, and I've met a lot of people who... You know, my favorite... I was at Purdue University, which is an engineering school. And so I would get these kids who have never done anything in their life, physically, and try to work on teaching them a backflip. And much, like, kind of you've described, the first couple of ghosts of it, they all blacked out the second they get upside down. And so, my strategy for that sort of thing has always been to essentially find, if you can find an opportunity or a place where you can put yourself in very low physical danger, but very high kind of mental challenge, that is, at its essence, like, really how to train Parkour essentially, right? And so whether that is, you know, in your case, for being upside down, you know, hanging from something or however you might get yourself inverted and giving somebody else the control of that, I think that's terrifying, right? But if you can do it in a controlled place where you know that you will be safe, that's like a great place to work from. So, you've brought up kids as a great example is, I've worked very hard to help them have that sort of aerial awareness when they're upside down. And that's, you know, before bed when they need to get all the sillies out, you know, picking them up upside down and help, like, tossing them around and getting them comfy. And actually, before COVID, we'd take them into the gymnastics gym. And, you know, I'd say to my daughter, Evelyn, who's 5 now, "What's something that you wanna do today, that feels hard?" And it might be jumping down off of something. And so I'd stay there with her and I'd help her process those emotions. And I think having somebody else who you trust, who you can give over the control to is really the key to helping, like, build back that that competence and that awareness.

Katie: That's a great suggestion. I hadn't thought of that. But that's true. That could very easily create scenarios where it's padded and safe. But I would just have to let go of the control, which probably shockingly, you know, might be the problem all along.

Matthew: Exactly.

Katie: But yeah, and to your point, I think that's so important for kids, especially and I love that question, what's something you wanna do today that feels hard? That's something we're cognizant of in our family culture as well as I think we are as adults, and as entrepreneurs, and as parents, very much the sum of the internal questions we ask ourselves. And so I've talked about this on here before. You know, if you ask yourself the question constantly, internally, why is this so hard for me or why can't I lose weight, or whatever the case may be... Your brain and your subconscious are going to just continue to answer those questions. Whereas if you give yourself and your subconscious, good questions to aim for, how is this so easy or why is this so much fun to learn? Whatever it is, your subconscious and your brain start working on that question. And I think our kids learn to shape their inner voice, largely from the questions we asked them. And so we ask them questions, like, "What are you grateful for and what hard things did you do today or what hard questions did you ask today?" But I love that one of what's something you wanna do today that feels hard? Do you have any other things that you do with your kids, whether it be to pass on that great spatial awareness, or kind of the fundamentals of entrepreneurship, or to teach local food. I always love to ask the parenting questions as well because Wellness Mama was founded on the idea that, you know, our kids, will very much have the power to shape what the future looks like for them. And there's a lot of parents listening. So, any other tips on those fronts?

Matthew: Yeah, I think, you know, it's interesting, I think, inviting your children early into those questions, I think is the key. And I think the invitation is really the part I wanna emphasize, right? So, we signed up for too many CSAs as you did. Yet, we still made space to do a small garden at home. And that garden was for the kids. That was not for us. So, they directly participated in growing food that then they also went out, and harvested, and ate. And the rules with the garden were that they had to take care of it. And they had to order it and we helped invite them into that responsibility. And then they had free rein to pick it whenever they wanted. So we tried to show them the benefit of you know what? That strawberry is not red yet. I swear it'll taste better if you wait, right, and try to help them, things like delaying gratification, and all of that. But I think, you know, inviting them into a process and lowering the stakes on things to where... You know what? You want to eat green strawberries, like, you could just find out what that's like. And I can help you decide the why. I think is really, really important. And so, I think local food is another interesting venue for that. Last year, our kids went to the farm and help plant garlic. And they helped shell corn to make popcorn. And so I think inviting them into the world around them and helping them ask good questions, and face trade-offs, like work and reward, and all of that is really, really important. I think local food actually can be a great venue for that because it is so connected to community, and it's not something that's happening off far away.

Katie: It's a great point, I love it. And I will make sure that we link to LAEF and to the other specific web resources that you've mentioned, as well as to the books you recommend. Those will be in the show notes for you guys listening at wellnessmama.fm. And I definitely would encourage you guys to find a local food

economy and get involved with it for health reasons, budget reasons, and so your family can feel connected to your food source. And definitely pass this resource on to your local farmers to help them out. I've been doing that in my area. I think this is something that's very, very needed. And I'm really grateful that you guys are building something like this and spreading the word. And I also know how busy it is to run your company, so thank you so much for your time and being here today.

Matthew: Yeah, no, it's always a pleasure to chat and very excited about where this is headed and the good we can all do together.

Katie: And thank you as always for listening, for sharing your most valuable resource, your time, with both of us today. We're so grateful that you did and I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama Podcast".

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