



Episode 401: Rethinking Education to Set Our Kids Up for Success With Jesse Elder

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This episode is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals. They're on a mission to reinvent your medicine cabinet with clean remedies that really work, including some of my favorites that I'm gonna tell you about today, like B.Soothed Cough Syrup, which is a really clean cough syrup that helps you and your family bounce back quickly. I always keep this in my cabinet to have on hand at the first sign of being under the weather. And unlike a lot of cough syrups, it doesn't have any of the ingredients I'm trying to avoid. It has a naturally delicious, sweet, very mild berry taste. And it's powered by some of my favorite natural immune supporters, like pure buckwheat honey, elderberry, which I have talked about a lot on my blog, and Chaga mushrooms, which is known as the king of mushrooms for all of its antioxidants and immune-supporting properties, as well as Bee Propolis, and olive leaf extract. It is free of drugs, dyes, dirty chemicals, and refined sugar. Like I said, it tastes delicious. So, if you are feeling lousy, to soothe your throat and promote recovery, you can take this delicious cough syrup. And my kids I don't have to fight them at all. They absolutely love it. It's not my only favorite Beekeeper's product though. My family is obsessed with pretty much all of their products, but some others that we love. Their Propolis Throat Spray is one of my go-tos. I always travel with it and I always keep it in my purse. Propolis is incredible. It's not honey. It's made out of plant and tree resins, and bees use it as essentially the immune system of the hive to keep the hive safe from germs. And now humans get to benefit as well. I like to use four sprays every morning in my throat for a natural immune support. And I use more anytime I'm feeling under the weather or a scratchy throat.

They also have something called B.LXR Brain Fuel, which I have taken today as I record podcast. It is one of my remedies to naturally beat brain fog and really helps me be productive. I like to take one shot first thing in the morning, especially on days like today, where I have to be on task and focused all day to support clear thinking, deep focus, and a healthier brain over time. It's better than coffee because it has no jitters. I won't lie. I like to drink coffee as well. But it's powered by science-backed adaptogens that really help me feel like I'm focused and in the zone without feeling jittery at all. My kids really love their B.Powered honey, which I think is the most powerful honey on the planet. It's not just any honey. It's a blend of propolis, royal jelly and bee pollen. So, it's great for energy and immune support. And another thing, it tastes delicious and it can be used with drinks or on foods or all by itself with a sprinkle of sea salt, which is my favorite way. It contains raw honey, which is an easily digestible natural fuels. I've been taking a spoonful of this before I workout on really active workout days. It also contains bee pollen, which is nature's multivitamin and contains free-forming amino acids and nutrients. It's actually denser in protein than any other source on the planet. And it's used by Olympians to improve endurance and performance. It contains propolis, which I've mentioned already as I love the germ-fighting compound and royal jelly, which is what is given to the queen in the hive. And it contains the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, and some really unique fatty acids that help promote clarity, brain health, and focus. You wanna check these out and upgrade your medicine cabinet, I would stock up soon because a lot of these stock out, especially this year, I have a feeling they're gonna go quickly. Check out Beekeeper's Naturals and save 15% on your first order by going to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama. That's beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama to save 15% and upgrade your medicine cabinet.

This episode is brought to you by Alitura. You've probably heard me talk about that. This is a skincare company I love, and it's founded by a dear friend of mine, Andy, who created these incredible products when he was in a horrible accident that left him with scars on his face. And this sent him into an incredible research phase to figure out ways that he could hopefully heal those scars and not have them with him for life. And he's developed some incredible products that have allowed him to do just that. One of my favorites is their face mask. And if you've seen me on Instagram with clay all over my face and hair, this is likely the one that I'm using. It's a simple mask that does incredible things for the skin and contains dozens of really, really beneficial ingredients. I notice a big difference in my skin tone when I use it regularly. They also have something called the Gold Serum, which I find especially nourishing for my skin without being too oily. And I love to use that, especially before we go outside or if I'm gonna be in front of the red light. I just find it's really, really beneficial for my skin. I love all of their products because they use completely natural ingredients, and not just natural but incredibly beneficial ingredients. Andy goes above and beyond to make sure that everything that is contained in these formulas are so beneficial for the skin. And his skin is certainly a testament to how well they work. And I've gotten incredible feedback from many of you who have tried these products and loved them as well. They're much less expensive than spa variations of skincare products and I found that the quality is so, so much better. And I don't worry at all because I know they're so natural. I would love for you to check out their products and find out all about the different formulas they have by going to alituranaturals.com/wellnessmama. And they've generously offered a discount of 20% with the code WELLNESSMAMA, all capital, all one word.

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, my new line of personal care products. Be sure to check them out. This episode is about one of my favorite topics which is education but not in the traditional sense that a lot of people think of education but specifically for our kids and how do we set the map for the best chance of success in life and what does success even look like in an increasingly technological world. And I'm here with one of my favorite people to talk about this topic with, Jesse Elder who is an author and a mentor, speaker, a multi-time entrepreneur. And he is also working on creating resources for families specific to the changing nature of education right now. Jesse is a really cool example of this, because he actually never received any traditional classroom education, and has become a wildly successful entrepreneur. He would argue not in spite of that, but because of that. So we talk a lot about how to maintain our kids' natural states of creativity, critical thinking, imagination, courage. And he has a really amazing approach that he recommends, it dovetails really well with the kind of uncurriculum that I'm creating that I've used with my own kids and will have available to share with you guys soon. But I think this is a very timely and important conversation, especially as many families are taking on more and more of the education of our children with the changing nature of the school system. So I think this is an incredibly relevant and timely episode. It was a great conversation. I hope that you will learn as much as I did from it. Jesse is a wealth of knowledge. So without further ado, let's jump in. Jesse, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Jesse: Katie. It's my pleasure. Really, I've been looking forward to this week. We've had so many conversations offline. It's nice to get one recorded.

Katie: Yeah. I've been looking forward to this as well. And exactly like you said, we've had some incredible discussions and I think this one will be a really fun listen for everybody listening today. And to start, for

anybody not familiar with you, I'd love for you to just give us a little bit of your background, and especially since we're going to be talking a whole lot about education today and what education actually means. Talk about your educational experience as a child.

Jesse: Sure. I am incredibly appreciative to have never gone to school. I've never been in a classroom, I've never sat behind a desk, I've never gotten a grade or taken a test that came from a book. My dad was a school teacher, ironically, for most of his career and he saw a lot of things that were happening in the system, even back then and he said, "Yeah. We don't really wanna be part of that." So I was given a tremendous amount of freedom growing up. And the more time that passes, the more appreciative I am to have had that freedom and had the opportunity to learn from my own experiences and experience natural consequences, which are the best teachers. And I think we should be able to dive into some specific ways that parents who are interested to facilitate that for their own kids can do so.

Katie: Yeah. Absolutely. So many directions we can go with that. What did that actually look like for you on a day-to-day level? Because I know knowing you as an adult, that you, certainly like a lack of this classroom education does not seem to have at all impaired your adult life. In fact, if anything, it seems to have enhanced it because you've been successful in many different areas. But what did your day-to-day look like that was probably such a stark comparison to what a lot of kids today, what their day-to-day looks like?

Jesse: Yeah. I love this question, Katie. Obviously, I'm looking back through the filter of, you know, my own memory, my own values as they've evolved today, but I remember hours upon hours of getting to do whatever I was interested in and very little structure, you know, there was, you know, you wake up and you'd eat breakfast, and do your chores, and that's it. And we'd have stuff scheduled. It wasn't just like, you know, my mom would just disappear and say, "All right. You're on your own." But there was hours and hours every day that we were free. And I'm the oldest of five, and so my brothers experienced this to a certain extent as well, and my sister later when she came along. But there was, you know, you do your chores and then what are you into?

You know, I would take my bike to the library and I would check out every book that they had on whatever subject I was interested in, and it ranged from medieval weaponry to snakes and turtles. And I thought I wanted to be a herpetologist, you know, reptile scientist. So I read every book in the library and planes, and then history, and tons and tons and tons of fiction. And ironically, I didn't talk until I was four, according to my mom, and my first words were, "Hand me my book, please." And so that was maybe a kind of a taste of things to come. And I read for hours a day. I loved it and spent a lot of time playing outside and just building forts and having all these experiments. And, you know, we would, at various times have different resources coming in, either borrowed from other families because we really didn't have a lot of money growing up, but we never felt poor. I didn't feel financially poor until I was like 18 and I started to get out in the world and go, "Oh. Oh, wow. Everybody didn't live in a trailer with no air conditioning. This is weird. Okay." But it was a very rich childhood, full of experiences, full of adventure, full of memories. And that lack of structure allowed a very resilient, inner structure to develop. And every time I would have a desire to learn something, every time I would just have this insatiable curiosity, which, by the way, I think is a natural state of a human being. I think human beings are born innately curious. It's only when we're taught or told that what we value is less

important than what other people think is important, that's when the curiosity begins to die. But it can never be killed. And so you can bring it back pretty quickly even if somebody's had that experience, a child or adult.

But I had experienced many times of being frustrated because there was something I wanted to learn and I wanted to know and I couldn't figure it out. And I remember one time...I just thought about this now because we're talking about it. As I mentioned, I was super into snakes, and turtles, and reptiles. And I had seen a snake at the park, Breckinridge Park in San Antonio. And I saw the snake and, you know, of course, this is way before cell phones, so I couldn't take a picture of it, but I'm dying to know what kind of snake this is. And so none of my books say anything about it, I have to talk to the zookeeper. That's my, you know, like 8, 9-year-old brain. "I have to talk to the zookeeper." And I'm begging my mom, "Please, mom, we have to go to the zoo. This is incredibly important." She's like, "We're not going to the zoo today. You can figure it out." And I'm like, "No. I need to go to the zoo." And she said, "Well, you can't go to the zoo today, so you're gonna have to figure it out." And I said, "Well, I don't know how to figure it out." And she said, "Okay, well, I guess maybe you don't really want to know that badly then." "No, mom, you don't understand. I do wanna know." "Okay. Then I'm sure you'll figure it out."

And next thing you know, I've got the white pages out and I'm trying to figure out how to call the zoo. Then I find the zoo's number, then I called the zoo, get the zookeeper on the phone, breathlessly explain what I saw. The zookeeper's very friendly, told me the kind of snake it was. It was a certain type of garter snake and the feeling of not only relief, but of confidence and accomplishment, and that was the beginning of a very simple, but for me, life-changing understanding that there's nothing that you can't figure out, no problem you can't solve, there's no result you can't obtain if you really want it bad enough. And thanks to having experiences like that, not textbook lessons or videos, that lifestyle has continued to this day.

Katie: I love that. We have a core idea in our house that we don't do anything for our kids that they're capable of doing themselves with kind of the same idea in mind, is that we want them to be able to learn early just how capable they are and to have to kind of sit with the discomfort of different things and learn how to solve those problems and learn how to have self-mastery and to work through a lot of that on their own. And I feel like one of the roadblocks a lot of parents maybe run into in today's world is this idea that seems relatively modern, that we need to like entertain our kids or curate for them and kind of shape their experience and that kids shouldn't be bored and they shouldn't have to, you know, work too hard. And I see so many parents who are just completely stressed out, driving kids to all of these activities and curating every moment of their lives, and then these kids don't get to have those kinds of experiences or thinking through my kids' lives right now, they have a lot of time to be bored and to learn things on their own. And we've got forts in the backyard, they've built a foundry to melt aluminum, to build armor for a Halloween costume. My sons were shooting squirrels the other day to eat for dinner. The girls are learning gymnastics on their own in the front yard, like, it's amazing. It's truly amazing what they can do. Like you said, when you get out of their way. And I feel like there's like a psychology component there that somehow has shifted in the last generation or maybe two generations with this idea that we need to constantly entertain our kids.

Jesse: Katie, like I'm smiling ear to ear as you're describing your kids', you know, afternoon. It's so awesome that they get to follow their own intuition, inspiration, and all of that. And you opened up some great loops

there. This is a recent phenomenon, and there's a couple of reasons for that from my experience. And for those of you that are listening to this, I mean, Katie and I have known each other for years now. And so I've hung out with you and Seth in all sorts of cool places on the world. But I guess, you know, just for credibility, you're not like, "Who is this dude?" One of my passions growing up was martial arts and I ended up training, loving it, ended up teaching by the time I was 15, 16, 17 years old and I knew this is what I wanna do for the rest of my life. And so I started teaching full-time and I competed and it was just my life. By the time I was 23, I'd opened a school, and over the next 18 years, built up a very successful chain of martial arts schools and ended up selling those a few years back. And so in the process of that, I worked literally with tens of thousands of kids, both directly in our schools as well as indirectly through other teachers that we were training in our certification program.

So whatever I'm about to say is not just from, you know, like my nostalgic childhood, South Texas experience, but this is from having literally hundreds of hours of conversations with parents and teaching tens of thousands of classes. And so, to your point, Katie, about boredom, so many parents have unresolved, unfulfilled sort of yearning for the childhood they wish they had and many parents have a life, and this is gonna sound harsh, but I mean this with love, many parents, many humans are just living lives that they are not personally fulfilled and deeply thrilled with. And so this double whammy of, you know, there's things growing up I wish I would have that I didn't, coupled with, you know, "I really don't like the way things have gone for me in a certain area, and so I want to make sure that doesn't happen for my child. I'm going to both give them everything I never had as well as, you know, make sure that they've got everything they need to have the best possible life." And obviously, these are generalizations, but I've seen these patterns emerge over and over again.

And this is a disaster, actually, a parent who feels the need to take away their child's boredom... Boredom is a prerequisite for brilliance, hands down every single time. And if a child is allowed to be bored and if a parent can have the fortitude and the foresight and their own resilience to say, you know, when their child comes to them forlorn and they're bringing their hands and, "I'm bored" is just to smile and say, "Sweetie, that's okay. That's okay. You're allowed to be bored. You can choose to be bored. You can choose to be excited about something. You can choose to do whatever you like right now." Now, I can just hear now some parents will be like, "That's a disaster, just let my child do whatever they want?" Well, depending on the age of your child, you have much opportunity to shape their choices.

I remember another very powerful experience that happened also when I was a kid, my dad came home from his job teaching one day and he had all these books and he just put all these books out on the table, on the kitchen table, and he called me in the kitchen and he said, "Jesse, you can read whatever you like. You know, these are all the books that you can read. You take your pick, read whatever you want." And he walked away. And I remember the feeling of like, I had just won the lottery or something. I just thought, "No way. I can read whatever I want? This is amazing." And it wasn't until probably 20 years later that I realized how smart he was, and what a wise thing that was, that he chose the choices. He selected the things that I was then able to choose from but never told me what I had to do. And so it was very, very smart on his part. And my mom did the same kind of thing many times. And so if a child is bored, that's a fantastic sign that there's this restless creative energy.

And so, as a parent, if you are choosing the choices and you've got clear boundaries with your child, then they should be bored. They get to be bored so that they can use their imagination. And imagination and courage are really the only limits that a human being has in their life. Everything else is figure-outable. But if you don't know something's possible, how can you be expected to do it? And if you don't have the self-trust and the confidence that comes from learning and making mistakes, then you're kind of screwed in that way. So let your child be bored, let them say, "I don't know what to do." Smile and say, "Honey, I'm sure that you'll figure it out because you are an absolute genius and I believe in you." And then let them have their experience. And that may include no screen time. It may include, you know, having a treasure hunt and hiding the iPad that they have to figure out where it is using critical thinking skills. So there's a lot of ways that we can do this.

Katie: I love that you boil it down to imagination and courage. We had come up with similar representations of those same ideas when our oldest was approaching school age, and we started trying to evaluate, "What's gonna best prepare him for success in life?" Which led to the question of, "Well, what is success in life that's not just financial, certainly? What would we consider a success for him as an adult for his happiness and all the things he might want in life? And then from there, what best prepares him for that?" And we realized...we were looking at that point at school versus homeschooling and realized none of the available options really seem to prepare kids for an increasingly technological future. There's certainly been much talk about how rapidly changing everything is and what life will look like when our kids reach adulthood.

And so, it led us to the question of, "Well, what does prepare kids for that type of a future?" And we came to a similar conclusion, is they need curiosity, and creativity, and critical thinking skills, the ability to learn things quickly, but also things like self-sufficiency and self-mastery. And I hear from a lot of employers who struggled to find people who have these basic skills now and I feel like that's another important point. And I know you and I have talked about this offline before, but kind of the difference of this like what is traditional school actually preparing kids for and what do we wanna do differently to prepare them for a different type of future? And I think you have talked about the container theory versus the conduit theory before. Can you explain that?

Jesse: Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. And this is such an important conversation. The future is increasingly technological and at the same time, the leaders have always been those who are innovative enough to see a vision and to mobilize other people's time, and talent, and energy. And, you know, these are the entrepreneurs and these are the creators, and the inventors, and the artists, and there's always gonna be a place for doers, and for coders, and for makers, and for people who are programmers and people who are gonna be doing the technical pieces, but the far greater opportunity lies in innovation. And that's what this...I won't even say alternative approach to education, this is the original approach to education. This is what education has been for thousands, and thousands, and thousands of years. And even before human recorded history. This is how nature teaches its young.

And so, it's only in the last 150 years that we've had this sort of standardized, centralized education, which is not designed to empower, it's not designed to teach creativity, it's actually designed to teach conformity. It's

designed to teach fitting in, it's designed to teach scarcity and competition. And, you know, there's a lot of opportunity the parent has to create experiences for your child so that they can, first and foremost, get to know who they are and then develop confidence in their abilities, confidence, and trust in themselves. And these are things that... I mean, I'll be 47 in a month, and I still feel like I'm just getting started on this journey of self-discovery and self-mastery.

So the container versus conduit theory is sort of at the heart of many parents and many teachers' educational dilemmas. And I wanna say quickly that while I don't believe that the school system is a benevolent or a beneficial thing. Most teachers that I've met are unbelievably great human beings. Like they're just good people. They get into teaching because they care, because they wanna see kids succeed, and then unfortunately they enter a system which doesn't allow them a lot of freedom and a lot of power to be able to do that. So they kind of hang on caught between a rock and a hard place. But this idea of container versus conduit theory, the predominant view of a child, which is very influenced by some of the original Western psychological thinkers like Sigmund Freud, for example, the view of a child, of a human being is that they are born somehow inherently flawed. There's something wrong with them, they're deficient, and they need to be taught how to be sufficient. They need to be taught how to not fail, they need to be told and conditioned, and preached to and programmed so that they end up being successful and able to be a productive member of society.

Well, this is a very interesting premise. You know, if we assume that a child is born incomplete intellectually, they don't have the skills that they need in order to succeed in the world, well, then, yeah, that makes sense. Then you have to put them in a classroom and just force-feed them all of this information. But this is a very, not only inaccurate, but I think it's a very damaging way of looking at a human being. You know, anybody who's ever held a baby in their arms can't see anything. If they're a halfway healthy human, they can't see anything except this bundle of joy, this fresh from source energy, fresh from God, fresh from heaven. Here they are, have arrived into this place. And the reason people feel that way when they see a baby is because it reminds every one of us of who we are at the core before we get the conditioning, before we get the programming, before we were taught that we're not enough. And, you know, there's not a baby on the world that's born thinking that there's something wrong with them. Every one of us had to learn that from our environment, and it's just not true. You know, we're born enough, we are born worthy. There's nothing we're here to prove or that we have to, you know, make up for.

And, obviously, you know, those are some of my beliefs and my world views, and everybody's free to have their own, but instead of looking at ourselves as a container that was empty that needed to be filled up with the right information, according to the experts, whoever they are, instead of that, what if we just saw ourselves, these sort of conduits, and you've got input and you've got output, you've got information that's coming in, you make some choices and then there's an expression. There's a communication, there's action. And if we're continually receiving input, then our ability to make sense of that information is going to determine what our actions are gonna be. So, easy example, take a child five, six, seven, eight, nine years old, and without any instructions, without any rewards or any threats, just sit them down, let them have a room to themselves for a couple of hours with a blank journal and some markers. And if they were to just be free to have their own experience, their imagination would begin to kick in.

Now, where is that information coming from? Well, we can say, pretty observably, it's coming from, you know, movies they've seen, and the stories they've heard, and friends, and family members. But eventually, the imagination is going to really come online and they're gonna start to draw things that are quite fantastic. They're gonna get ideas that are gonna be captured in visual form. And so this is this creative expression, this ability to create is very much a natural human function. And I'm not suggesting that everybody's just gonna operate purely on intuition all the time, there's obviously a tremendous place for that, but there's also a tremendous place and value in accumulating knowledge, accumulating information. But just think about what happens when a child is free to pursue their own interests and to a large degree, control their own input. If they're naturally drawn to gardening, or if they're naturally drawn to hunting, or if they're naturally drawn to coding, or they're naturally drawn to drawing, or they're naturally drawn to taking care of their siblings, or they're naturally drawn to disappearing on their bike for an hour or 2 or 10, depending on your comfort level and where you live, let them. Let them follow their own intuition, their own desire.

And this is one of the most challenging parts of being a parent, is just trusting, you know, that your child is perhaps even guided, you know, by a higher power. And perhaps then your job is to let that connection strengthen on its own. And children are watching how we live. They're not listening to what we say. And so if any parent out here has the... Again, I mean this lovingly, but this is just what I've seen over years, and years, and years, so many parents are trying to tell their children how to live a good life. Kids are not listening. They're watching. They're watching and seeing, do you love your life? Do you enjoy your day? Do you enjoy work? Do you enjoy your partner, if you're in a relationship? Do you love yourself? Do you treat yourself kindly? Do you take time for yourself? Are you having your own adventures? And some of those might include them, some of them might not, but that's what is forming this sort of composite of the child's information and input and far superior to just taking a bunch of books and having them memorized so that they can get a test, which is gonna produce a grade that has arguably very little merit in the real world.

Katie: Have there been any roadblocks or challenges for you that have come up because you didn't have the same classroom education a lot of kids have or have you been able to navigate all of those?

Jesse: Oh, man. Katie, there's been so many roadblocks, so many obstacles, every single one of which was internal and self-created. Yeah. Nothing practical, nothing tangible. And to be clear, you know, I found something early in life that I loved, martial arts, and martial arts is admittedly an unregulated industry. So you don't have to have a degree, you don't have to go to university, you don't have to become an MD or P.h.D. I know many of my friends growing up wanted to be veterinarians, they wanted to be surgeons, and so they took the steps appropriate to that and ended up acing their MCATs when they were 15 years old. So I personally didn't have any of those to deal with, although I'm confident that I would have figured it out. My roadblocks were much more reconciling my own sense of insufficiency in a world that prized grades, you know, in a world that prized education.

And, again, it didn't really hit until my early 20s when I started hanging out with people who were going to college and, you know, I was this kind of freak who just never went to school, but, again, it was perfect

because it really reinforced the value of self-reliance and it helped me to have, not just helped, it gave me an experience of what I would call self-authorization that I know who I am and I know what's right for me and whether somebody approves of it, disapproves, is dismissive, or is curious, that's their experience, and I'm more than happy to have a conversation, but it doesn't have anything to say about me. I know who I am. And so those experiences in, you know, my early 20s were not comfortable, but I wouldn't have had it any other way.

Katie: Yeah. And to echo what you said a minute ago, too, I agree with you 100%. Some of the most amazing people I know are teachers and I think, like you said, teachers get into this because they truly do care. And there are some really, truly incredible teachers. I say the same thing about doctors. You know, even though I don't agree with necessarily all of the traditional medical approaches, I have found largely that doctors get into that, endure all that school because they really do care. So I love that you brought that up. I never wanna speak badly about teachers, but I also agree that there are some really deep-seeded problems with the education system. And I feel like parents, even if they start recognizing that, might still have this kind of inner fear that their kids are gonna be missing out on something by not having a traditional education in the way that it's set up right now. And certainly, the one that comes up even for homeschoolers is the socialization aspect. And then, you know, our kids, aren't getting enough social interaction, which knowing you as an adult and knowing many other homeschoolers now as adults, I find actually really laughable, but I'm curious your take on that.

Jesse: It is kind of comical. I mean, I've every homeschooling friend that I have who's an adult, most of them are entrepreneurs, many of them has incredibly deep connections, not only with friends and family but with global audiences. And so, you know, it is kind of laughable that, you know, the thing that seemed like such a horrible thing actually turned out to be great. A couple of other little loops so we can go down here, the educational system... And I've heard this from many parents, and it wasn't really only until a couple of years ago that I realized what I would say the truth is, but I've heard from many parents and I used to think myself that the school system is broken. You know, there's something wrong with the system. And I was determined to change the system from the inside out. I was gonna go work with these teachers and we're gonna bring in this life skills program that we taught in our martial arts schools and we're gonna help these kids to be successful.

And over time, I began to realize that a system is only broken if it doesn't perform the function that it was designed for. I'm on a laptop right now, you're on a computer there, presumably. And if the connection wasn't good or Zoom wasn't working, then we could say, "Oh, the system's broken" Because it's not doing what it's designed for. But I began to realize that the school system was actually not designed with education as its primary goal. And I've seen this over, and over, and over again. If we really look at education, not institutions, not the buildings, and the textbooks, and the teachers, and the teachers' unions, and the PTA. And we're not talking about the institution of education, we're talking about the phenomenon of education. We're talking about the uniquely human ability to learn something that is not a requirement for survival. I mean, let's just think about that. What a miracle it is that human beings are the only species, at least that we know of, that can learn things that have nothing to do with passing on your genes or surviving another day. Every other thing in nature operates according to preset lines of instinct. And yes, we can say, "Well, chimpanzees, you know, they will play with each other and dolphins will, you know, blow bubbles at a pufferfish until it spits off

poison and teenage dolphins will actually huff the poison of the pufferfish to get high." This is a documented fact. But they're not out inventing things. They just are beautiful, fantastic beasts, beautiful animals, obviously intelligent in ways that we aren't, but they're still operating along the lines of instinct. Humans are not. Humans have this incredible thing called imagination. And we can envision things that do not exist and then we make them, we build them. And so the process of education, not bureaucracy and not the institution of education, but the phenomenon of education, the natural phenomenon.

Educa is the root of the word educate, one of the roots, and it means to draw forth from within. And so, there is an innate desire, an innate calling. You might even say it's a unique frequency that every human being has and it is unique to them. Everybody has abilities, which are very special to them. And every human being is uniquely abled and every human being is uniquely disabled. Everybody has things that they're great at and everybody has things that they just are never gonna be great at and they shouldn't even try. There's enough of us on this planet to all help each other out and do so for fair exchange. And the process of education is actually the process of discerning one's own desires, following one's own impulses of curiosity and intrigue, and the natural tendency of wanting to know more and allowing oneself to not only have that experience but if you're a parent, to encourage that in your child and along the way, if you're concerned that they're not getting enough social time in, well, there's something else that is worth looking at here. You know, if a child simply likes to spend time by themselves, what's wrong with that?

And if they had anxiety around other people, then that's understandable. You know, we've all probably experienced that in one way, shape, or form, but these are not afflictions. And so it takes a very strong parent to break free from the social norms to worrying about what other parents are gonna say or worrying about the judgment that they might pass upon themselves if something bad happens and their child doesn't grow up healthy, but your child is here on their own unique journey. And if you stay out of their way and continually reinforce the belief that you have in them and give them lots of opportunities to have lots of different experiences, they will find the things that they gravitate towards. Like, Katie, you're talking about your daughter's doing gymnastics and then, you know, you've got a foundry where you're making armor for a Halloween costume. I mean, who does that? Well, that's the natural response of a self-authorized, empowered child who's given the freedom to pursue what they want, perhaps a little bit of resources, or the very least, encouraging their resourcefulness so they figure it out on their own. And I'll pause there because I know that there's some other loops that will go down here.

Katie: Yeah. I love that. I think that's a really hard thing to realize, is, like you said, the school system is doing what it was designed to do, and maybe it's time for our kids' sake that we reevaluate that approach.

This episode is brought to you by Beekeeper's Naturals. They're on a mission to reinvent your medicine cabinet with clean remedies that really work, including some of my favorites that I'm gonna tell you about today, like B.Soothed Cough Syrup, which is a really clean cough syrup that helps you and your family bounce back quickly. I always keep this in my cabinet to have on hand at the first sign of being under the weather. And unlike a lot of cough syrups, it doesn't have any of the ingredients I'm trying to avoid. It has a naturally delicious, sweet, very mild berry taste. And it's powered by some of my favorite natural immune supporters, like pure buckwheat honey, elderberry, which I have talked about a lot on my blog, and Chaga mushrooms,

which is known as the king of mushrooms for all of its antioxidants and immune-supporting properties, as well as Bee Propolis, and olive leaf extract. It is free of drugs, dyes, dirty chemicals, and refined sugar. Like I said, it tastes delicious. So, if you are feeling lousy, to soothe your throat and promote recovery, you can take this delicious cough syrup. And my kids I don't have to fight them at all. They absolutely love it. It's not my only favorite Beekeeper's product though. My family is obsessed with pretty much all of their products, but some others that we love. Their Propolis Throat Spray is one of my go-tos. I always travel with it and I always keep it in my purse. Propolis is incredible. It's not honey. It's made out of plant and tree resins, and bees use it as essentially the immune system of the hive to keep the hive safe from germs. And now humans get to benefit as well. I like to use four sprays every morning in my throat for a natural immune support. And I use more anytime I'm feeling under the weather or a scratchy throat.

They also have something called B.LXR Brain Fuel, which I have taken today as I record podcast. It is one of my remedies to naturally beat brain fog and really helps me be productive. I like to take one shot first thing in the morning, especially on days like today, where I have to be on task and focused all day to support clear thinking, deep focus, and a healthier brain over time. It's better than coffee because it has no jitters. I won't lie. I like to drink coffee as well. But it's powered by science-backed adaptogens that really help me feel like I'm focused and in the zone without feeling jittery at all. My kids really love their B.Powered honey, which I think is the most powerful honey on the planet. It's not just any honey. It's a blend of propolis, royal jelly and bee pollen. So, it's great for energy and immune support. And another thing, it tastes delicious and it can be used with drinks or on foods or all by itself with a sprinkle of sea salt, which is my favorite way. It contains raw honey, which is an easily digestible natural fuels. I've been taking a spoonful of this before I workout on really active workout days. It also contains bee pollen, which is nature's multivitamin and contains free-forming amino acids and nutrients. It's actually denser in protein than any other source on the planet. And it's used by Olympians to improve endurance and performance. It contains propolis, which I've mentioned already as I love the germ-fighting compound and royal jelly, which is what is given to the queen in the hive. And it contains the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, and some really unique fatty acids that help promote clarity, brain health, and focus. You wanna check these out and upgrade your medicine cabinet, I would stock up soon because a lot of these stock out, especially this year, I have a feeling they're gonna go quickly. Check out Beekeeper's Naturals and save 15% on your first order by going to beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama. That's beekeepersnaturals.com/wellnessmama to save 15% and upgrade your medicine cabinet.

This episode is brought to you by Alitura. You've probably heard me talk about that. This is a skincare company I love, and it's founded by a dear friend of mine, Andy, who created these incredible products when he was in a horrible accident that left him with scars on his face. And this sent him into an incredible research phase to figure out ways that he could hopefully heal those scars and not have them with him for life. And he's developed some incredible products that have allowed him to do just that. One of my favorites is their face mask. And if you've seen me on Instagram with clay all over my face and hair, this is likely the one that I'm using. It's a simple mask that does incredible things for the skin and contains dozens of really, really beneficial ingredients. I notice a big difference in my skin tone when I use it regularly. They also have something called the Gold Serum, which I find especially nourishing for my skin without being too oily. And I love to use that, especially before we go outside or if I'm gonna be in front of the red light. I just find it's really, really beneficial for my skin. I love all of their products because they use completely natural ingredients, and not just natural but incredibly beneficial ingredients. Andy goes above and beyond to make sure that everything that is contained in these formulas are so beneficial for the skin. And his skin is certainly a testament to how well

they work. And I've gotten incredible feedback from many of you who have tried these products and loved them as well. They're much less expensive than spa variations of skincare products and I found that the quality is so, so much better. And I don't worry at all because I know they're so natural. I would love for you to check out their products and find out all about the different formulas they have by going to alituranaturals.com/wellnessmama. And they've generously offered a discount of 20% with the code WELLNESSMAMA, all capital, all one word.

We came to a similar conclusion with our kids. When I mentioned with our son, when we were trying to figure out what was gonna be the best approach for him, and I ended up essentially throwing out all of the traditional approaches to schooling and developing our own loosely termed curriculum that we felt like would better preserve those innate skills that you mentioned that kids have like that imagination, and creativity, and critical thinking. And they are natural question-askers. They're brilliant at it. And I realized in researching that and trying to create a curriculum that was focused on those things and skills up versus just knowledge down, like you said, instead of throwing knowledge at them, basically, how do we enhance these things that they already have, and at the very least not squash them? And I realized, you know, people doubt like, can they really learn that well without a traditional education? And I came across so many examples from Einstein to Rockefeller, to Michael Faraday and Thomas Edison, and Leonardo DaVinci, and Milton Hershey and Abe Lincoln, literally across the board, people who succeeded with very little classroom education and certainly no college education. And people look at examples and say, "Oh, wow, how amazing that they succeeded despite not having college education or formal education at all." And my challenge is, no, I think they succeeded because of that, because they got to maintain those skills.

And I had developed this, again, loosely termed curriculum, because it's not that, with the idea that hopefully some time down the road I would be able to share it with other families, especially as other school approaches and educational approaches might become more widely accepted, but I figured I had at least probably a decade before it could reach that point and then this year COVID hit and now virtual schooling is widely accepted in all states. And so I'm working on getting this in a format that families can use. I know you've been also working to get families resources to help kind of create some of these alternative approaches that let kids preserve these innate qualities. What are some of the ways that we can create this type of educational foundation and experience for our kids outside of having them being in the classroom now that that's such an option?

Jesse: Yeah. I love this. It really is an exciting time as challenging as it has been for most people this year. And real quick, I wanna just echo what you said about these minds who did not go to school and yet they were so successful. I am absolutely convinced after studying this and with my own experience and observing so many families and just being around so many successful...and I don't just mean financially, but physically, relationally, spiritually, people who are genuinely happy with their lives. I'm convinced that if everybody would have had the Abraham Lincoln experience, let's call it that. If everybody would have had the experience of learning on their own, we would have a full world of geniuses. They wouldn't be seen as these phenomenal celebrities who are so rare, they would be everywhere because that is the natural state of a human being.

The fact that they are so rare speaks to, you know, what happens when somebody slips through the cracks, when somebody makes it, you know, out of the system with their mind, and their heart, and their brain and their intuition, and their courage, and their integrity intact. And I realize I'm taking a very hard line on the school system here, but it was not designed to encourage creativity and innovation and all these things. So for parents who are listening to this, let's say your child is in the system and is, you know, for maybe even just nothing more than convenience, maybe there is, you know, there are some other factors that make it challenging for you to create a homeschool or a pod learning, or some other alternative, here's my best suggestion that I've seen has been useful for parents and for students. Be involved in how your child feels about school and ask them, "What was the hardest part of your day today?" Ask them, "What was the best part of your day today?" You know, a very interesting question depends on the level of communication that you and your child have, but a very interesting question to ask them is to say, "When during the day did you feel most like you?" And just observe what they tell you. And without guiding, without trying to steer the conversation, just let them have their own experience. And if you make this a sort of practice, sort of ritual, and just be involved at the level of conversation, you'll start to see patterns. You'll start to see what they're having a hard time with, you'll start to see where they're succeeding, where they're excelling. If there are things that they're interested in, see what you can do in your extra time to give them additional exposure to those things. You know, maybe there are, you know, forget about watching YouTube videos on science projects, go do some science projects or better yet, just give them a bunch of ingredients and stay out of their way and let them have their own experience, you know, assuming it's relatively safe.

Now, if somebody is a...if you're a family or you're a parent and you are actively homeschooling or you're looking at pod learning or something along those lines, it's very powerful to be curious about what your child is learning without projecting your thoughts about the future. So, for example, your child is struggling with algebra, they're having a hard time with math. You know, maybe you have a story or maybe you have some legitimate experience in your life, you know, that you had a hard time with that, and it made it harder later on when you took your SATs and then that made it harder to get into school. Well, that was your experience. Let them have their experience. And at the heart of all of this is a question that you can always ask your child. For that matter, we should all ask ourselves, and that is, what do you want? If your child's frustrated because they're not fitting in, if they're frustrated because they feel like they're not cool, if they're frustrated because they like that cute boy or girl and they don't know if that person's gonna like them back, it just comes back to that question, "Well, what do you want? What do you want?"

And a child who is consistently asked this question becomes so confident, so sure of themselves because this is exactly opposite from what the rest of the world is telling us. The world tells us that what we want doesn't matter, that we have to get other people to do what we want so that we can have what we want. And it's all about controlling other people's choice, other people's voice, other people's opinion. But really, if we just tap into what do we want, how do we want our life to look, and if we ask that of our kids, and if we ask that of children, "What do you want," they will stay connected to that inner signal, they'll stay connected to their heart, they'll stay connected to that childlike innocence that powers curiosity from life. And, you know, Katie, the curriculum that you've created, and, again, and a curriculum is just sort of like a placeholder word because it's much more of a set of experiences and that's what's amazing about it, but what you're creating is a whole set of opportunities for children to be fully powerfully human, which means curious, which means innovative, which means learning from mistakes, which means making lots of mistakes, but not taking those mistakes personally. And if more people just made more mistakes without taking it so personally, they would have a lot

more fun in life. They would be a lot smarter, a lot more resilient. Now, this whole idea of failure, which is, again, reinforced so heavily in the classroom is very damaging to the human soul.

Katie: I agree. And yeah, to your point, it's, like you said, the system is not broken. We need a new one, and we have the opportunity as families to create these learning environments at home without it being stressful. And honestly, in creating that curriculum, I should call it a non-curriculum, actually, that I'm working on for families, a lot of it is into addressing the parents and kind of untraining this need to have the kids sit down and do bookwork all day and to help them really understand many of these things that we've talked about is that you can do so much less. In fact, not only can you, what you should, and you can let go of the guilt of that because it highlights all of these things that kids naturally do. And like you said, getting out of their way, we're big on getting out of their way, but then giving them access to any tools for learning that they need to pursue their interests.

So now with technology, of course, so many of those things are available on the internet, but also things like libraries, or the supplies to build things like foundries, or to be able to cut down trees and build forts or whatever it may be, giving them the tools to dive in and pursue these things and to find out what they love, and what they wanna do, and what they're confident at. It's been a beautiful process to watch. I'm really excited to see as they get older. And one thing we also do with our kids, I've talked a little bit about before I'm here is that as they approach the age that would traditionally be considered high school age, instead of bookwork and testing and all of that, we create an entrepreneur incubator for them. And we have this agreement with them that they have to have a profitable business before they can have a phone that's their own or drive a car. Because we feel like running a business actually gives you a lot of the skills that illustrate that you're responsible enough to do those things and so we work with them to create a business that provides some kind of value either in our community or online. It doesn't have to be wildly successful, but it has to be profitable because that shows us that they have the responsibility and consistency to manage that they have been able to see and find problems for someone else and provide value by solving that. And that's been my favorite part so far all of this with them, is getting to see their entrepreneurial minds turn on and then start to create these business ideas. And I know you naturally became an entrepreneur now in various different areas, probably because of all that creativity that you were infused with and didn't lose.

Jesse: That is so well said. And I love what you're creating. And it really is a template for not just success, but for so much contribution in the world because your kids, you know, what they're developing as a normal thing for them will affect so many other people, you know, if they choose to have families of their own, then that will create even greater... that experience set will just sort of propagate and for anybody who's experienced what it's like to build a business and to see something that you care about, help someone else, and to have them appreciate that help to the level that they're willing to make an investment and buy a product, buy a service, whatever it is, and then you get to use that money to fulfill other goals, I mean, it's such a healthy way for humans to live. And there are so many multiplying opportunities, you know, like this whole pod learning thing, which is expanding like crazy right now. There's so many... Almost every day I see stats on another state where attendance is down like 4% in, you know, New Hampshire, 9%, in Massachusetts, I think, 6% in Texas.

And these public school enrollments are just dropping like crazy. And I think it's one of the best things to come out of COVID and, you know, the fact that parents might not feel like the best thing yet, but it's forcing all sorts of solutions to come in and, you know, we're building a platform that will connect parents and teachers directly. And so it's the Uber of education and we don't have to deal with the school system. You can get the exact level of facilitation if you value structure and you think that it is important for your child and they do better with structure, then you'll find a teacher who has that same exact value. If you value freedom, massive amounts of freedom, you'll find a teacher who also matches that value. And so we're working on building this platform and, you know, in the very near future, you'll be able to just go online, fill out a profile, you find the exact teacher for you, and then you may have the best of both worlds. Then we'll have the, you know, "Wellness Mama," experiential educational approach that you'll be able to then have a teacher facilitating that with your child and four or five other families and you still have your time to work, to maybe grow your own business, to live your own life, and know that your child is getting really the best of all worlds. So, very, very exciting time that we're in.

Katie: Yeah. I'll make sure there's links. I know you have a group for this already so people couldn't figure out how to stay in touch and learn more as the pod learning program unfolds more and more. And, of course, I'll keep sharing details about my system as well. You're right. I think they dovetail perfectly, and you are the perfect solution for parents who aren't quite willing to make the jump to homeschooling or just simply can't or don't have the time, or it's not the best option for whatever reason. Like you said, I love that COVID has opened up these opportunities where things like pod learning are now widely accepted in most states. Do you guys have any resources for parents who, as they jump into that for navigating the laws of different States? Because I know there's some variation in different states.

Jesse: Yeah. Surprisingly, the local state governments have all of their stuff basically available. So you can just look up the laws on pod learning, homeschooling, private classroom, and with a couple of Google searches in your area, you'll be able to find what they require, what they need. And these laws are changing. You know, at the time of this recording, there are certain laws in place where for health and safety, you know, that's the reason that's being given. There's no more than six children in certain jurisdictions. That's gonna change. It's gonna change, you know, by next week. It's gonna change by next month. There are some states, Massachusetts as of a couple of months ago, that will not allow a teacher to get paid by families privately. But these are reactions.

These are very reactive measures on the part of the school system because they...speaking openly here, I think they see the writing on the wall. They see that given the opportunity for a different solution, many parents are going to take that. You know, for me personally, I mean my risk tolerance is pretty high and if I was a teacher, I wouldn't charge anything to be in my pod. You know, I would say, "Hey, I'm gonna teach because I love to teach and if we match philosophically and if our values align and I'm somebody that you would like to work with your child, then I'd be honored to do that. No charge. I am gonna invite you to buy a t-shirt for your child so that they can, you know, wear it to PE, and the t-shirt is about \$8,000 a year. And, you know, you can take care of that with a PayPal, or credit card, or whatever's best for you, and you can even break it up into monthly payments." But it's just for a t-shirt. Now, that's me. People listening to this can do whatever they want, but I do know that you cannot stop innovation, and bureaucracy will always try and find a way to slow

things down. And bottom line is that nobody gets to tell you what's right for you and your family and you get to make choices that are safe, that are healthy, and respectful for everybody involved.

Katie: Yeah. That's a great point. I have a similar risk tolerance too and I'm just really excited to see all these changes happening in all these different states. And seeing so many parents being willing to take an alternative approach partly out of necessity this year, but like you said, I think it's a great silver lining of COVID and I'm really grateful that this is happening and I'm grateful to be able to be part of that change and help families along the way. And as I knew, it would, of course, our time has flown by because I could talk to you all day. But a couple of questions that I love to ask at the end of episodes is, first of all, if there's a book or a number of books that have had a dramatic impact on your life, and if so, what they are and why?

Jesse: Yeah. Various phases, I guess, in my life. You know, growing up, I read all "The Hobbit" and "Lord of the Rings," and I didn't realize until years later, how impactful that was for me. And it's interesting that they still sort of function as sort of filter that I find useful. So those are classics that have served me really well. In terms of understanding the world and seeing, you know, how life sort of works, I read a book called "The Sovereign Individual" when I was in my mid-20s and it really, really affected me. It took me about a year to dive into, but it was very powerful in understanding economics and politics from a very different perspective. And then there was somebody recommended "The Fountainhead," which I got into also in probably my late 20s. And that was very, very instrumental. And then it kind of got me studying some of Ayn Rand. And while I'm not a, you know, self-professed of anything, I don't really have many labels, but I appreciated her writing and the way that she spoke so intensely about self-reliance and about trusting oneself and operating on a fair basis with the world. For parents who were interested in some of these educational concepts, a great author named John Taylor Gatto is somebody I came across a couple of years ago, also amazing, amazing guy. He was a teacher in the school system for, I think, almost 30 years in New York and ended up writing a ton of books about the system. And he's been very influential on my thinking. And then let's see. On the woo side, Abraham Hicks is always an interesting listen or read. I think my mom turned me on to them a couple of years ago. I was like, "What is this? This is ridiculous." Channeling, I don't think so. I was like, well, "let me just listen to it, see if it makes sense." And I found some interesting things there. so I could continue, but I think that's a pretty good cross-section.

Katie: That's a great list, including some new ones that have not been mentioned before. So I'll put all those links at wellnessmama.fm, along with links people can find you and more about the pod learning group. Any other places online that people can find you, and follow you, and keep learning from you?

Jesse: Yeah. Best place is social. I'm pretty active on Facebook and Instagram. Facebook is just facebook.com/jesseelderlive or [/timepiercer](https://timepiercer.com). And then on Instagram is Jesse Elder Live, J-E-S-S-E, E-L-D-E-R live. I have a website which is from time to time updated, so, jesseelder.com. May or may not be completely up-to-speed. I tend to just really dive in and engage on social, and that's a great place to stay connected.

Katie: Awesome. I will put all of those links there, and I have a feeling this will be a continuing, developing changing part of society for the next several years, at least. So I think we might have to do another round.

Jesse: I would love that. I would absolutely love that. That'd be an honor.

Katie: Awesome. Well, thank you so much, Jesse, for your time today. This was a blast.

Jesse: My pleasure. Thank you, Katie.

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.