



Episode 417: The Energy Formula and Biohacking From Home With Shawn Wells

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is sponsored by Four Sigmatic, my go-to source for functional mushrooms like Lion's Mane, chaga, cordyceps and more. Recently, I've really been enjoying their protein powder... it's new and it's delicious. It has 18g of pure plant proteins, 7 functional mushrooms and adaptogens, the realest organic vanilla, and not a single grain, gum, or gram of stevia. I love adding the vanilla to a smoothie with some berries for an easy meal (and my kids love it too). The Peanut Butter flavor blended with some cacao and macadamia milk makes a great protein-packed afternoon pick me up. If you haven't tried four sigmatic, I also love their lion's mane coffee in the morning and their reishi packets at night! Go to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and code [wellnessmama](https://foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama) gives 10% off.

This podcast is sponsored by Paleovalley. They make amazing grass fed beef sticks are the only beef sticks in the USA made from 100% grass fed/grass finished beef and organic spices that are naturally fermented. They use old world methods of fermenting their sticks so they are shelf stable without the use of chemicals or questionable ingredients. Virtually all other similar snack stick products use GMO corn-based citric acid encapsulated in hydrogenated oils to process their products. Thanks to this fermentation process, they don't have any of that junk and each stick contains gut-friendly probiotics! My kids love them and I can never keep them in the house, so now we are just on a regular auto order. Go to paleovalley.com/mama for 15% off.

Katie: Hello, and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellness.com. That's wellness with an E on the end, if you haven't checked it out, my new line of personal care products, including hair care and toothpaste that is mineral-rich, to help your teeth be stronger and whiter from the outside in. I am here today with a follow-up guest who I really enjoyed the first time around, Shawn Wells. And we're here to talk about his new book, which is, "The Energy Formula" and ways we can biohack from home that are not expensive or complicated. Shawn is an incredible expert in a lot of different areas, and he's become a personal friend. But he's considered the world's leading nutritional biochemist and an expert on health optimization. He has personally formulated over 500 supplements and cosmeceuticals. And he has patents on 10 novel ingredients. Online, he's often called the "Ingredientologist." And he is also formerly a chief clinical dietitian with over a decade of clinical experience. He's also considered a world-renowned thought leader on mitochondrial health, and he is often paid to speak on many of these topics. We go deep on a lot of them today. And he gives some very specific advice on ways that you can help improve your own health, have more energy, and then some simple tests that you can take to figure out over time how things are working for you, specifically. You guys know that I'm big on personalization and individualization when it comes to health, and that's been part of my own journey over the last couple of years. We go deep on some specialized tips to do just that in this episode. So join me in welcoming Shawn.

Shawn Wells, welcome back.

Shawn: Thank you for having me on, Mama.

Katie: I'm excited to chat with you again. It's always a pleasure. And it's really fun when we get to record our conversations and share them. And I know that you have a new book coming out, which I'm most excited to chat with you about today. So, to start broad, kind of give us the big picture of what the new book is about and what inspired you to write this one.

Shawn: It's called "The ENERGY Formula," and it's an acronym. So, it's an Experiment like biohacking. Nutrition that includes things like keto, and paleo, and Mediterranean, and a discussion of all those things. Exercise, so it includes things like hacks, like high-intensity interval training, blood flow restriction, intraset stretching. Routines like circadian rhythm, morning and nighttime routines, how to nail those down. Growth mindset, like stoic thinking, and also building resilience through things like fasting. And then lastly, Your tribe, and having that community around you.

So it's a framework and there's supplements throughout. I have these formulators corners for, like, each chapter. There's different supplements that I recommend. Like in growth, there's nootropic supplements, brain-boosting supplements. And in nutrition, there's a discussion on polyphenols and anti-aging compounds. And it's really cool. There's also something called Resource Hacks throughout that really gives you, like, the devices I'm using, the products I'm using, like, you know, sunlight and sauna, and some that fix sleep tape, and what brands of supplements I use, and just everything. And I have zero affiliate codes or anything associated with it. It's all just the stuff I use.

Katie: That's awesome. Okay. So let's start at the beginning, if you don't mind, and we're kinda just gonna go point by point because most of the people listening are moms. There are some who aren't, but most are. And I feel like, I've said from the beginning, if you can give moms extra energy and bandwidth, you improve the whole family because we're often the emotional support and energetic drivers for the family and making sure everything gets done. So, I'm really excited to jump in with you today on all these points. But let's start with E. So walk us through just some of the high-level stuff we need to know about the first point of this. And obviously, we'll make sure everybody has a link to get the book as well. But let's start at the beginning.

Shawn: Yeah, so it's Experiment. So, it's biohacking, but I like drilling into the idea of it's someone that's willing to experiment, willing to try that receives the benefits in life. You know, there's that mindset I think we're entrained with that you either win or you lose. And people get conditioned to fear of failure. But if you look at Tim Ferriss's "Tools of Titans," there's a mindset there that almost every person that was a success that he interviewed had, and it was, one, a strong morning routine, which I get into later in the book, but two, a mindset of not viewing things as a failure, but viewing things as experiments and you win or you learn. Thomas Edison, when he was working on the light bulb had, obviously, a number of these experiments that did not work out and result in a light bulb. But collectively, they did. And he would say, "No, it's not a failed experiment. Like, now I know what it's not."

And so, understanding your bio-individuality is so key here, and that's the key to experiment. Like, I love studies. But there's no study on 8 billion people. So, we need to take data and say, you know, any good study ends in...for these 20 people, we saw these statistical averages, including these people that dropped out in the process. And we need to do more research. That's usually like the way a good study would end. You don't want to over-infer anything because everything works differently for everyone. And then there's the whole idea of compliance. I can tell you something that may work great for you, but are you going to do it, and stick with it, and make it part of your lifestyle? That matters. Like, when I was a dietician working clinically, you know, you could tell someone to not drink four liters of Coca-Cola a day and go to zero and start drinking water, but if they don't do it, and give up, and just go back to drinking all that Coke, then is that successful? So I started viewing things through the lens of, like, what's realistic for you at this point in your life? Can you get down to two cans of coke a day? And then let's talk again.

So, you know, that's what I walk through is, like, thinking through what works for you, doing one thing at a time, that's also the scientific method, like we tend to with, you know, New Years, try and do like 40 things at once, and shotgun it, and hope it all works. But you don't know what's working for you and not working for you. You need to do the scientific method and see, "Okay, this one thing, I can do that. I can go do CrossFit or F45, or whatever. I can stick with that and do that for two weeks." And you're like, "Yeah, this is good. I'm adding this to my lifestyle." And okay, let me see how paleo works with my new workout routine. And you stick with that for a couple of weeks, and you say, "Okay, I think this is working. I can add this," and start stacking up things. But if you do like 10 things at once, you're taking all these pills, you're going to CrossFit, you're doing paleo, you're, you know, getting peptides and doing stem cells, and 100 other things, you don't know what's working and not working. And then you'll just end up giving up everything. So, that's a big part of the experimentation is knowing that you're unique, you're bio-individually unique from everyone else. And to just approach things with I win or I learn, which means I win or I win.

Katie: I love that reframe. And you're right. I think any successful person you can point to in history has had that mindset. And it's so vital. I love that you brought that up and also the personalization aspect with the idea of reframing as failure is good. As an example, right now, my kids are all getting into chess. I've got a couple that have always been into chess, but all of them are kind of getting on board right now. And the ones who are just learning kept getting frustrated because they kept losing to the ones who have been playing for years. And I've got one who's just naturally really good at chess. And I keep trying to remind them, when you're playing chess, the first 200 games, winning is not even your goal. Learning is your goal. Don't even worry about who won. Your whole purpose right now is to learn. And I think it's sometimes easier to think that way in a game but we don't realize it applies to almost every aspect of life. And like you said, when we think of it that way, there really is no losing because there's either a lesson or you already figured it out and you won.

I think the personalization key, I know you and I have chatted about this in person, is so important right now. And I'm so glad we're seeing this shift because, for a long time, it felt like people were looking for a system that could just follow exactly like just tell me a checklist of what to do. And people ask me that with my own weight loss the last couple of years and, like, I can't. I can tell you where to start trying to find some things that might be your puzzle pieces but I can't give you a black and white checklist. And I think that is such a vital thing. And I love that you start there. Because it's so easy to want to just find that silver bullet or just find that checklist. And at the end of the day, it doesn't exist. And I'm 100% with you on the experimentation and

figuring that out. Do you have any suggestions or tips for what to track, what variables to look at so someone can know over time if something's working for them?

Shawn: Oh, yeah. You know, I go through that quite a bit in my book. And I also have these surveys that you take, one, to kind of see where your baseline is and see how you're improving, but I also mentioned a number of metrics that you can use. I mean, not only things like blood work, there's three in particular that I think are very profound that everyone should be looking at that I think could reshape healthcare is if we were looking at inflammation, oxidation, and glycation, which are all hallmarks of aging, which are all hallmarks of mitochondrial dysfunction, which is at the core of disease and lack of energy, the mitochondria, the powerhouse of the cell. And so, hemoglobin A1c for glycation, CRP, C-reactive protein for inflammation, and then oxidized LDL for oxidation. And looking at these, this is when you're starting to see dysfunction take place on that metabolic level. And you can assess biological aging. You can assess likelihood for disease. You can assess energy status to some degree because the mitochondria are not healthy or there's not enough of them by looking at those.

But really the biggest key, I would say, is do you feel energized? Do you feel happy? Not all the time. We need to feel our emotions, but in general, do you feel satisfied in life? And I think...I was just with a doctor, Dr. Dan Stickler, who's a peptide expert in Austin, and we were talking about these doctors, these medical practitioners, if you will, that are in Africa in these certain tribes that when you go to them, and you say, you're not feeling well or you're sick, the first thing they ask is, "How long has it been since you've danced and sang?" And there's, like, some profundity to that. Like, it's very profound to think about, like, when you're happy, when you're energized, you dance and you sing. And when you're not, it's repressed and your heads down in life. So, we wanna be thriving and not surviving. I think that's the biggest key metric is how much are you enjoying life and how do you feel?

Katie: I agree. I started tracking...I do labs regularly, including the ones you mentioned. And I use Heads Up Health for keeping all my labs in one place, but I also keep just a running note in the Notes app of my phone that has daily just kind of food inputs, workouts, and then I also put those in like my Oura Ring app and things like that, just to be able to see patterns over time. And I love your suggestion of, you know, just pay attention to your body, but also I only add one variable at a time. Give yourself time to...And I'm the worst about that. For a long time, I'd be like, "Okay, so this time, I'm gonna experiment with three new supplements and I'm gonna try this new workout." And I would do it all at once and then I couldn't tell what was having the effect. I would see a change, but I couldn't pinpoint where it was coming from. So now I'm a big fan of anything new, I'm gonna add in one at a time, so I can actually gauge what's going on. I also love testing myself just I've been experimenting with glucose monitoring, continuous glucose monitoring, which has been a fun metric. And also HRV, which I think we touched on briefly in the first one, but just as a refresher, kind of give us a reminder of what HRV is, and how we can use that to kind of indicate how our body's responding to something.

Shawn: Yeah, heart rate variability, HRV, is something that you can track with these things like you're talking about, like with Oura, and Fitbit, and Biostrap, and the Garmin fēnix. And it's a good measure of how recovered you are. Dr. Stickler and I were actually looking at...I was playing twos volleyball, which is very intense, like, just very dynamic. And I played for four hours, which is a lot at a high competitive level. And we

looked at it and for about two hours, I was doing good, but my second two hours, I'd plummeted. And I played through it. And I've thought my whole life, like, that's what I'm supposed to do. It's just, like, push until you drop. But he showed me, like, over the next three days, like, everything was just tanked on me.

And so, you know, immunity, recovery, like mentally, like sleep quality, all of this is tied into how properly are you recovering? And there's the idea of overtraining is another word for under-recovering. So, you're not giving yourself enough nutrition, hydration, sleep, de-stressing, going into the parasympathetic state. Like, we tend to stay very sympathetically driven. And you need to, like, get that vagal tone, where you tap into parasympathetic with, you know, meditation, and relaxation, and listening to music and, you know, doing poetry and, you know, whatever, like, those things are that gets you to relax, but we tend to stay very sympathetically driven with the hustle and grind, which is like sympathetic and ultra sympathetic. And so HRV is a great measure of readiness to train, readiness to go into a sympathetic state, essentially.

Katie: Got it. Yeah, I've noticed that, like, right now, today, mine is lower because I'm recovering from an intense workout. So today is a rest day for me. I'll probably sauna and hydrate and that's about it for today. But it's so fun to be able to have all of these tools now directly at our fingertips to be able to gauge if something's helping or not. And I know you're big on this too, but there's so much freedom in that data and in the personalization because, like you said, there's no study on each of us individually. So even if we look at clinical data, that's an overview based on averages. But we can now look at how is my individual body responding? And we can also now look at our own genes. We just have the availability of so much information that we can get so incredibly personalized. And I know you've walked through a lot of those strategies.

So, let's move on to the second one, to the N, and walk us through some of the high-level points there because I feel like this is one where on the one hand, we have a lot more consensus maybe than we have in the past and people understand the importance of real food and of avoiding certain things. But then we almost seem to fight over, like, the 3% we disagree on more than we ever have. So, take us through some of the high-level stuff on this.

Shawn: Exactly, Katie. One of the things that I talk about is that we all should agree on is whole food. Like, that's just basics. And it sounds very simple. But how much whole food are we actually eating? You know, there's so much food engineering, ultra-processed food, high bliss point food that's literally made for you to overeat it. And that's the problem is it's overriding satiety, which is fullness signals. And this food is meant to do that. It's meant to trigger dopamine and serotonin. Like, you're literally impulsively driven to eat this food. So whether you're talking about carnivore, Mediterranean, paleo, vegan, a lot of these diets now, the core hallmark is eating whole food. Like, you could eat carnivore and just eat, like, spam and hot dogs, I guess, but like, the idea is to have, you know, grass-fed, grass-finished, like organ meats and, you know, stuff like that. And then same with vegan. Like, you could have Coca-Cola and gummy bears and be vegan. But plant-based nutrition and Vegan is the idea to have whole foods.

And if we look at these diets, with those like supercentenarians, these Blue Zone people, that's what we see is they're eating whole food. That's probably the key. But if I was to pick a diet, like I talk about paleo, I do talk

about keto, although keto, I think, is a more advanced strategy. Again, once I would stack up whole food, getting rid of sugar, having some kind of exercise plan in place, and then having some kind of fasting in place, like intermittent fasting, something that's fairly easy, then I might look at keto. So, it's those things that I think are essential first. And then, you know, Dr. Daniel Stickler and I were talking, he has a lot of research. And we probably agreed that if we were to pick like one diet and, again, bio-individuality, compliance matters, whatever, if you were trying to pick the healthiest diet, it would be Mediterranean keto. That would probably be, like...I mean, just with the data, like olive oil is such a powerful fatty acid. It's been shown to be a sirtuin activator, which is anti-aging, along with things like red wine, which has resveratrol, which is another sirtuin activator. The sirtuin genes are the aging genes, the resilience genes if you will.

And then keto just being low carb and promoting ketones, it's going to keep insulin lower. It's going to keep blood glucose lower and glycation, that blood sugar damage lower. The entire world doesn't need to do this, the Western world. It definitely benefits us because we just have such a high glycemic ultra-processed food diet that keto undoes a lot of that. And it provides an alternate fuel source that it's good, I think, to be metabolically flexible. I do, kind of, cyclical and targeted ketogenic dieting. So, I still have my carbs. I still have fun carbs. I still have, you know, cake if I'm going to a wedding. I still have my cheat days, and fun foods, and pizza, and whatever. But 90%-plus of the time, I'm strict on my diet. And then 10% of the time, I have fun foods. And that's what allows me to make this a lifestyle that's not revolving around restriction. And that's been a key for me because I used to do, like, strict keto and then I'd, you know, crash and go off and, you know, have all these carbs. And then three weeks later, I'm like, "What happened?" So, this works for me, is doing cyclical and targeted ketogenic dieting.

Katie: Yeah, and I love to focus on metabolic flexibility as well. And in the same place of I realized what is the long-term goal, for me, the long-term goal was not that I would be eating an extremely regimented diet for my whole entire life. I'm willing to do that, like you, most of the time because I feel so good but there are gonna be times when I don't. So how do I become the most metabolically flexible so that when I do decide that I'm gonna eat, you know, avocado oil potato chips, or whatever it is, my body can handle it without me feeling horrible the next day? You also mentioned sirtuin activators. So for anybody who's not familiar, kind of explain to us what sirtuins are and why this is an important key.

Shawn: The sirtuin genes are a set of genes. I believe there's eight of them. And they're kind of like sirtuins circuit survival genes. So, like, the more you do things that promote resilience, the more these genes are activated. So it's like hormetic stressors, which just means challenging the body. So think of things like fasting, working out, you know, doing things like keto, doing hot and cold therapies, challenging yourself with body temperature, doing breathwork, things like this, like, challenge the body and create greater resilience. You become harder to kill. And these sirtuin genes become activated. And the different number genes like SIRT1, SIRT2, SIRT3 are in, like, different tissues, affect different parts of the body. But essentially, the idea collectively, is they promote resilience and therefore, extend life and have, like, less methylation of the DNA and all that kind of stuff. So, yeah, the sirtuin genes are a huge focus in terms of anti-aging and quality of life as well. Again, the more resilient you are, the more you can bounce back and take on something like COVID or even all the stresses around COVID, the fear, and all those things. So, that would be what they are and why they're so important.

Katie: Awesome. Well. Okay, so let's keep moving. I know there's so many points, and at the end of the day, people just need to also get your book because you've got so much more than we can cover in this episode. And I know we've already talked about you're just gonna have to become a regular guest too because you're such a wealth of knowledge. But let's get on to the next one. What do we need to know?

Shawn: Exercise. So, obviously, you know exercise is good. But again, you know, you should look at overtraining. You should look at things like you said HRV. I do love Heads Up Health by David. I'm a big fan of that too. I use a Biostrap and a Garmin fēnix but I know people love the Oura Ring too. But exercise, there are some hacks. So, again, going back to that hormetic stressor idea, the idea of low-intensity steady-state training like typical cardio is not that effective. If you enjoy running or you enjoy, kind of, circuit training at the gym, and it's kind of a stress release, then that's good. Like, that's good for you. But just know that you will not receive maximal adaptation in terms of muscle mass, fat loss, improving in VO2 max, and in resilience. That's not going to happen with typical steady-state exercise.

High-intensity interval training is like burst training, like walk to sprint or jog to sprint, you know. And it can be like how you train with weights as well. You know, CrossFit, for example, is sort of like that. It's like an endurance version of HIIT. It's called metabolic conditioning. So, that's an ideal way to train. Like, you can literally do more in five minutes of HIIT training than you can do in an hour of typical steady-state training. And even if you might say that it's, you know, conditions-specific, like where a runner should just practice running, that's not even the case there. Like, they've shown that a runner doing sprints has greater increases in terms of their endurance and their performance than just a runner who continuously runs. So, that's one thing.

The next thing I would get into is a couple of other unique hacks. There's something called blood flow restriction, where you put on cuffs and you just cut off some venous flow of blood, the superficial level of blood and not arterial, which is deeper. And it's basically like putting a cuff on it, like a 7 or 8 out of 10. It just makes you feel like if you've ever done like a drop set or a superset where, like, towards the end, you just feel so swole and, like, you can't do another rep and you feel, like, the burn and your arms are super pumped, and you can start that way. And what helps is you can de-load. So you can get the benefits. There's something called cell swelling as a mechanism to promote hypertrophy in muscle growth. And you can de-load in the process. So if you're overtrained, and you've been doing too much weights and it's tough on your joints, you can go to like 40% of your one-rep max instead of 70% or 80% and still get growth and benefits. So it's a really cool technique.

And the last one I throw out is called intra-set stretching. And that's like keeping time under tension so your muscle is always under tension even between sets. So, think of if you were doing bicep curls...And by the way, don't ever rest at the top in a bicep curl. Keep that time under tension. Don't swing through it. You know, pause at the bottom, pause at near the top, and don't go all the way up so it rests. But in between sets, flex out your triceps as hard as you possibly can. And this stretches the bicep so it's still under tension, then you go

back into your set. And you'll see, like, just how difficult this is and how amazing it is, again, for promoting hypertrophy. So those are some unique hacks that I get into in the book along with several others.

Katie: I love all of those. And, like, these are such high-level tips too. I've had the pleasure of getting to just, kind of, tag along on an Olympic training protocol because we live near an Olympic facility here. And these elite athletes who are training for the Olympics this year or, like, this upcoming year are doing these strategies and not much more. They're not doing any long cardio. They're not doing super, super heavy. They're very very strategic and dialed in. And while it may take them an hour to work out in a day, the actual effort time of that is much lower because they understand the need for rest and the need for intensity, and they have all these factors dialed in. I've been amazed at how quickly the body responds when you do this, when you give it high intensity and then weights but in a very specific way. It's been absolutely astounding how much change I've seen in my body from this strategy. So, just echo everything that you said, especially the sprinting. That was not a thing I ever really did before now. And we did only like six sprints in the sand a few times a week during a couple of parts of these workouts. And it was really ridiculous how much faster I got just from that. It's incredible the body how fast it picks up, like, oh, we're supposed to run now? We're supposed to be fast? Got it. And it just adapts. It's been absolutely incredible to watch.

When it comes to exercise, another thing I'd love to touch on, and I know that you, I believe, are a fan as well, is sauna as an exercise mimetic. So you're not gonna get exactly all of the same benefits as exercise but from what I understand, you get many of the at least cardiovascular benefits of exercise. So if you don't wanna do that long-term cardio, sauna is a great parasympathetic resting way to get some of those benefits, but also sauna use strategically can make the benefits of exercise more pronounced. Is that right? Like, kind of walk us through how sauna can be used as part of this?

Shawn: Yes, it's synergistic. Not only in the heat aspect, but using red light therapy. So the combination of, like, near and far infrared and the sauna, you don't need to go quite as hot when you use the red light. So something like a sunlight and sauna, or you could use a regular sauna and use something like a Joovv light as well. It depends what you have access to. That's going to promote blood flow, promote sweating, which is, you know, again, like you're saying, like some things that you get during exercise. And it's going to promote recovery. And even better is something called contrasting, which I get into the book is when you create that greater delta in temperature. So, when you go from hot to cold.

So doing a cold plunge, or cryotherapy, or something like that, and doing sauna, or there's a technique that Ray Cronise has, a famed astronaut and researcher, where he does a contrasting shower, and he goes back and forth about 10 times with hot to cold, hot to cold, hot to cold. And that delta, again, creates even greater resilience. So, you know, we're so used to being thermoregulated at 69 to 72 degrees all day long, whether we're in our house, in our car, in our office, wherever we are, we're thermoregulated. And so, we're not getting the benefits of resilience like that. We're not getting the benefits of hot and cold. And very rarely would someone do both. So, that's even more powerful. Again, you wanna make sure you're in a place where HRV-wise, immunity-wise, you can handle that because this is a stress to your system. So you have something called allostatic load, where you can only handle so much stress.

You can create a bigger bucket, a stress bucket through resilience, but you need to make sure your bucket's not already overflowing or else some of this training, the high-intensity interval training, the hot and cold therapy, the, you know, working out with weights, you know, all these things, like they can be great for resilience, but you don't wanna put your body in a state of overtraining if it's already overstressed. So that's why it's important to, you know, if you're in the sauna, maybe add some meditation or, you know, things like that. That would be helpful. But yes, I'm a huge fan of hot and cold therapy. You can see things like the sauna raises, IGF-1 levels, GH levels, something called heat shock proteins. And then cold therapy as well, like, you know, dramatically improve something called brown adipose tissue and your metabolic rate. So, like, getting this exposure is going to make you more fit.

Katie: Yeah, and I personally find sauna just a lot of fun and more relaxing than exercise. I love having that in my toolkit. What about with cold...? This is the thing I've wondered personally right now. So when you do high-intensity workouts or strength training workouts, part of that is you're, like, using the muscle and you want that inflammation response a little bit because that's how you build muscle. And the cold from what I've read can blunt that, as can taking too many antioxidants within a certain window after exercise. Are there any good guidelines for that? I mean, this is a pretty fringe specific question, but basically, I'm asking, how soon after workout can I get cold?

Shawn: Yeah. Now, people ask this all the time of, like, if I take antioxidants around the workout, does that have negative effects? If I take an anti-inflammatory around the workout, does that have negative effects, or taking a cold shower after my workout? I used to worry about that. That's something that I no longer worry about. I listen to my body. If I've had a workout where I feel like I've really pushed it, then I feel like the degree of inflammation is not just localized, it's systemic, and it sometimes is too much, like I'm saying, like allostatic load-wise, it's too much. If I'm already, like, getting up early, I didn't get much sleep, I go to the gym, I train hard, you know, to me, like a cold shower is something that I'm receiving benefits from. Same with the antioxidants. Same with anti-inflammatories. Like, I would listen to your body. And sure, you should listen to your body in how you train, but listen to your body in what it needs. So, it's not that there's a wrong time or a hard and fast rule. It's something to be aware of.

And I would say, in general, it's probably more ideal to do the cold plunge, not around the workout, to do the antioxidants or anti-inflammatories not around the workout. But if you just feel malaise after your workout, if you feel inflamed after your workout, take a cold shower. It's way better than taking anti-inflammatories or taking caffeine or struggling through your day. Like, this is such a healthy intervention that it's just the benefits outweigh anything else. So, to me, that's what I would do. But if you're finished with your workout and you feel great, then yeah, hold off and maybe have that cold plunge later.

Katie: Awesome. Okay. So moving on to the next one so we don't run out of time. What are the high-level points here for R?

Shawn: Okay. So, routines. One, like we said, most successful people have dialed morning routines. And that's where everything starts with your day. I think it's really important to wake up not stressed out. You can get lights that come on in the room slowly. You can get chimes that come on slowly in repeat, instead of, like, turn on the bright light and meh-meh-meh-meh. You know, that kind of thing is very stressful to the system. You don't want a cortisol blast. You don't wanna, like, go full-on sympathetic nervous system to start your day. And another thing I do is I sit in my bed for a minute, and I do some breathwork for a couple of minutes. And move your body a little bit while you're still in bed. You know, do some kind of range of motion stuff and do your breathwork, and then do some affirmations. You know, say some of the things that you're going to accomplish today. Like, put it out there, like speak your truth. You know, say like, "I wanna have a successful day today. I will be energized and successful." You know, whatever it is, like, just put it out there. And then I like to do some journaling, like a five-minute journal, where I have some gratitude, and then go through, again, some of the things I wanna accomplish that day in a more specific way. I usually take a walk with my dog, listen to a podcast on the way to the gym, get a workout in at the gym, take my shower. I usually fast in the morning, don't eat until lunch.

And then when I do start work, it's really important that instead of going down that rabbit hole of email, and certainly don't do this with your phone first thing like when you wake up, but don't do this even when you first get to work is just start hitting all the emails. Get into one big task for the first two hours of your day. Knock that out and then you are successful. You feel accomplished and then jump into your email because then you're in a very different place mentally. No matter what happens, no matter what rabbit holes come up, you have accomplished something successful and you've already had your workout, you've already had your breathwork, you've already done your gratitude journal, and you've knocked out this big thing at work. Then get into your emails. You can just chase emails all day long and never really accomplish much. So it's something to be mindful of.

And also, stacking up phone calls with each other so that we're not in that distracted state. We are not good multitaskers. Some people say, like, women are good multitaskers or I'm a good...Like, none of that's true. It's called task switching. And none of us are efficient at it. And it really hurts. It can take five to seven minutes to switch back. So we wanna get in a state where we're focused on a task without distraction. And that's where you can do deep work. And for some people, that creative work, it's really important to do in the morning too. There is research that says, like, that 10:00 a.m. is kind of like the optimal time for that creative work. So, again, I would put that kind of stuff at the beginning of the day, and then get into your emails, then go have lunch, and then make the afternoon more about calls and connecting with people. So those are some things to do.

And then in the evening, you know, like, circadian rhythm is really important. And that's that sleep-wake cycle. And a lot of us are bucking that at night with all this blue light that we're getting and eating too late. And it's really important. Dr. Satchin Panda's data has looked at circadian rhythm and eating. We should be eating during the daylight window. It's very unnatural to be eating late at night or when it's dark. And so that's important to look at and avoid your blue light exposure from screens and devices, that you're getting too much blue light and you're not able to release melatonin, and shut everything down, and relax, and get quality sleep. So, that's important to start your morning feeling refreshed, getting a great night's sleep. And that's important to reduce that blue light exposure and then also to create a sleep fortress. And that means, like,

your bedroom is a place that revolves around sleep. If you need to use essential oils, definitely don't watch TV in the bedroom, don't do work in the bedroom. The bedroom is for intimacy and for sleep, and that's it. So, that's some important things with routines to create to set yourself up for success.

Katie: Amazing. I was sitting here taking notes for the show notes with everything you were saying.

This podcast is sponsored by Four Sigmatic, my go-to source for functional mushrooms like Lion's Mane, chaga, cordyceps and more. Recently, I've really been enjoying their protein powder... it's new and it's delicious. It has 18g of pure plant proteins, 7 functional mushrooms and adaptogens, the realest organic vanilla, and not a single grain, gum, or gram of stevia. I love adding the vanilla to a smoothie with some berries for an easy meal (and my kids love it too). The Peanut Butter flavor blended with some cacao and macadamia milk makes a great protein-packed afternoon pick me up. If you haven't tried four sigmatic, I also love their lion's mane coffee in the morning and their reishi packets at night! Go to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and code `wellnessmama` gives 10% off.

This podcast is sponsored by PaleoValley. They make amazing grass fed beef sticks are the only beef sticks in the USA made from 100% grass fed/grass finished beef and organic spices that are naturally fermented. They use old world methods of fermenting their sticks so they are shelf stable without the use of chemicals or questionable ingredients. Virtually all other similar snack stick products use GMO corn-based citric acid encapsulated in hydrogenated oils to process their products. Thanks to this fermentation process, they don't have any of that junk and each stick contains gut-friendly probiotics! My kids love them and I can never keep them in the house, so now we are just on a regular auto order. Go to paleovalley.com/mama for 15% off.

I think this next one, G, is the one I'm most excited about because this was one of the things you and I first talked about when we met was the idea of just how important mindset is, in general. I don't even think we fully understand yet just how important it is. But we know the data on a growth mindset and how important that is for success in every area of life, including health. So, walk us through some of the high-level points of this one.

Shawn: You know, like, I just did a plant medicine experience this past weekend. And one of the epiphanies that came to me was, "I am," and whatever follows that is empowering. And you're putting out into the world of what you are. At that moment, that is reality. Like, whatever you wanna be, you just say, "I am," and it changes your mindset, and it changes your approach, and it changes your belief structure, and it changes how people view you. But growth is a mindset. And I love the idea of...we talked before about resilience and hormesis. And growth mindset is the same idea on a mental level. So stoicism is a growth mindset. The obstacle is the way. And that's how we become stronger, where we don't dread adversity. We don't look for an adversity-free life. I mean, that's a path to fragility. And we want often, like, a way around the obstacle. You know, what's the hack? What's the cheat?

But really, the obstacle is the way where we relish that difficulty, that journey, like when we watch these sports documentaries or war...you know, whatever it is, these hero stories, it's because they've dealt with adversity and they've overcome it. And we cherish that as a people. We admire that. And so that's an important mind state to be in is how can I benefit from adversity? How can I grow stronger from this? What new things will I learn about myself? I'm learning about who I am on a deeper level. And because of adversity, like I had so many health issues, I was bullied, and abused, and all these autoimmune conditions and surgeries I've had, and deep self-loathing, depression, anorexia, obesity, I mean, suicidal thoughts. I've been through all this stuff. But on the other side of it, I wouldn't be talking to you, Katie, right now. I wouldn't have impacted a million people. I wouldn't be a supplement expert. I wouldn't be a biochemist. I wouldn't be a dietician. I wouldn't be standing on stage, like, desperately wanting to connect with people with empathy. I mean, all of that came through adversity.

And so, I've learned to cherish adversity. Does it get hard sometimes? Do you wanna, like, break down and scream? Sure. That's when that bucket is overflowing, right? But most of the time, we can grow our bucket, whether it's with mindset or like that resilience, the allostatic load. That's the key is your approach to it, your filter, like, how you view it. You know, the glass half empty or half full. I mean, that's so key is your perspective and what you're bringing to it. So many people saw this year as so frustrating and a terrible year. I saw this as an incredible year for so many opportunities business-wise. And two, for me to go inwards. And that's when I started doing plant medicine journeys, working with therapists, and getting mentors, and building my life team, and really developing my passion, and honing in my fire. And that's what I've got from this year. So that's what growth can bring you. And I really hope that your listeners can seek that out and benefit from that as just shifting that mindset to see something as this is an opportunity for me to grow.

Katie: Yeah, I think...I love that, "The Obstacle is the Way". I'm a big fan of stoicism as well. And I think this year, you're right, has been a great teacher in that. And if we view it as a lesson instead of a failure, as we talked about in the beginning, there's so much to learn. And we can think of this year as an incredible teacher for all of us. And I think this year has also really highlighted another thing that's so important for health and for mental health, and that many people are really struggling with feeling not enough right now, and that is the idea of community and connection and human relationships. And I love that this is the ending piece of your book because I think it's the one, when I look at Blue Zones, that I notice the most is, like, yes, they eat healthy and yes, they walk and they drink red wine, but they have really strong relationships, and friendships, and community. And maybe that's the piece we should be looking the most at. So, let's talk about community. I know we share a lot of thoughts on this. And I think it is arguably maybe the most important piece and one that, in today's world, can be hard to really get dialed in.

Shawn: So true. So true. I love that. Yes, and I've spent quite a bit of time in Sardinia, one of the key blue zones in Italy. And that was what was impressed upon me. As a nutritionist, like, as a dietician, like, I did the same thing, like, that you're talking about. I was looking at, oh, they eat the Mediterranean diet, like, how much red wine? What type of red wine. But when I went there, it was three-plus-hour meals. You know, they skipped breakfast, had like some espresso, they have a light lunch. And then they have this three-hour meal where, you know, they prepare the food. And again, it's that whole food. And they commune for hours, and they have therapy in that sense, and they connect, and they care about each other. They laugh and they cry, and they share the food. And it's a parasympathetic experience.

And when we have food, we're often triggered in a psychosomatic way for it to be a sympathetic experience, where we're, you know, on the highway and weaving in and out of lanes and, you know, the radio is up, and we're stuffing food in our face. And, you know, we gotta eat it as quick as possible or we do it while we're watching a crazy show on TV that's about explosions and killing. And then when you eat food, it actually triggers inflammation. It's not even just the quality of food. It's what we've entrained our body for. When they have food, they're fully relaxing because they're about to sit down for three hours and talk to friends and family, and really, you know, enjoy and slow down. And so that is a huge difference. And something I'm looking to build into my life is really building out more community.

And then speaking to what we were just talking about, like, the life team concept is something that I'm developing more and working with some friends on, and looking to hone in too is people that, like they say, you're a product of the five people closest to you. You know, who are those people that are around you? Are you consciously putting quality people around you that you admire and want to emulate and certainly provide value back to? It's not a one-way street. But you need people around you that are helping you to grow, that are challenging you in the right way, kind of like, again, hormesis and stoicism and resilience. It's that right amount of challenge and support. It's what your body, and brain, and soul needs is some of that criticism, but a lot of support too. And so, it's holding you accountable.

And, you know, just like when I do these plant medicine journeys, you get all these epiphanies but if you don't do the integration for the next three months or whatever it is, then it's worthless, then you just had an experience, and then you just go back into regular life, and do the things that you've always done. So you need to not only integration on your end to journal it, to think on it, to work on it, but have people hold you accountable to it and support you through that change, through your evolution. And those people need to be people that want to see you change, and grow, and become better. And certainly not people that want you to stay the same or be less than. Those people need you to be on fire, to be passionate, to be your best self. And so those are the key people to put around you. And certainly, you need to see that in them. You're like, "Wow, these are people that are their best selves." They don't need to be millionaires. They don't need to be concert pianists. They just need to be fully passionate and present.

Katie: Yeah. And I think our modern world is not naturally geared to facilitate those kind of relationships. I think we do have to be intentional about them in today's world. I also think that making that a priority, like you said, those five people that you are putting the most time into relationship with, can have the biggest impact on your life. Even, there's some really fascinating data about when not just one of those five people in your life has a dramatic change, it's more likely that you will have a similar dramatic change. For instance, if one of those five people gains a dramatic amount of weight, you're more likely to gain weight. People kind of understand that connection. The crazy part is when one of the five people that those five people spend the most time with gains weight, you're actually at an increased risk for gaining weight, even if you don't know that extra person. It's really kind of amazing how connected and how community really works like that.

And I've had to be very intentional about building that community in my own life. I think many of us have, especially this year. I'm a big fan in my life of having really, like, regular relationships like that. I also have what I call my personal board of directors. And we have those regular meetings, and I serve that for other people as well, where the goal is to help each other improve, and also to have a safe place to give each other critical feedback that can be helpful as well, constructively critical feedback. I think in a lot of relationships, people maybe don't feel like they have the freedom to say those things sometimes. And so having an area where it's expressly said, you know, "Please call me out if you see something I could improve on," or to have those relationships, it's been really, really impactful for me. So definitely echo what you said. I know, at the beginning, you also mentioned you have supplement suggestions throughout the book. And certainly, this is an area where personalization is most important. But I'd love to hear any supplements that you are experimenting with or loving, especially right now.

Shawn: Yeah, I think, like, if I was to give my top list, you know, there's some basics that I think people should be taking like vitamin D3. Certainly, we've seen even more data now around how important it is to our health and our immunity with COVID. It's a hormone. It's not just a vitamin. It's so unique, and it impacts so many parts of the body. And it's really like the anti-COVID if you look at, like, this ACE2 pathway for COVID and how vitamin D works. Along the same lines, I would say right now high-level vitamin C, either through IV or liposomal, you really can't go that high dose with vitamin C if you're just taking ascorbic acid because it will give you GI distress. So look at, like, a liposomal form or doing some IV vitamin C.

I really like polyphenols. So getting back to if you do look at data of these blue zones, one thing that is present is high doses of polyphenols in the diets. And for example, in some of the most historic foods, things like...and their polyphenols, like onions are high in quercetin, red wine, resveratrol, EGCG in green tea, pterostilbene in blueberries. You know, these foods have these polyphenols, which again, are sirtuin activators. They promote a key aspect of energy in the mitochondria. And NAD is that compound that's really key to energy in the mitochondria. So finding ways to boost NAD levels, which these polyphenols do...And some of the polyphenols actually not only boost NAD but they lower NAD ACE, the enzyme that breaks NAD down. It's also called CD38. So, that's a key. And as we age like at 50, we are making dramatically less NAD, and we're breaking it down at a much more rapid rate. So, this is a key to energies is having enough of these polyphenols.

Beyond that, I like a great multivitamin that has active B vitamins in it, the coenzymated B vitamins, things like methylcobalamin, 5-methyltetrahydrofolate, P5P, things like that. And it also has organic mineral salts. So things like magnesium citrate or the amino acid chelates, like magnesium glycinate, and not like the inferior forms like oxide or carbonate. Fish oil, I'm a big fan of. Probiotics. I think now we're looking at having prebiotics, which promote healthy bacteria, probiotics, which are the healthy bacteria. I like ones that are in spore form or microencapsulated so they're more stable. And then something now that's called a postbiotic, which is butyrate. And that's what these probiotics make. And so together, if you take them collectively, it's now called a symbiotic. So getting all those to promote gut health is wonderful. Alpha-GPC is the best form of choline and really important for brain health along the lines of acetylcholine and brain cell health, etc. I think those are some of the keys right there. Taking some things for mitochondrial health, like CoQ10, PQQ, NMN, those are all ingredients that I'm a big fan of too, and I get into in the book, but those are gonna be some of the best ones I would say right there.

Katie: I love it. Again, taking notes. I've experimented with some of those, even Alpha-GPC is one of my recent ones. And those are some that from adding one thing at a time and watching the response, I've noticed a big difference. For me, genetically, any of the choline and choline factors were important because I genetically need more and I don't tolerate eggs. So, when I started supplementing with that, I felt incredible. And then Alpha-GPC is another one I've really enjoyed lately, just for the mental. I feel so clear and so focused. So, I'll make sure...I've written all those suggestions down. And I'll put links in the show notes, as well as, of course, a link to your book so people can keep learning. Another topic, we don't have time to really jump into all the way but I want to at least touch on is the topic of peptides because I think we're gonna see more and more about these in the health world. So, just give us a high-level overview of what peptides are and some of the ways we can use them.

Shawn: So, peptides are, essentially, amino acids when stacked together. You can have...If you have two amino acids, they're a dipeptide, three, tripeptide, then you can get into oligopeptides, which just means short chains, and then longer chains are called polypeptides. So it's, essentially, amino acids. And this class of peptides, in terms of chemicals or medicines, if you will, are usually 50 or less amino acids. And so things like growth hormone or insulin are actually peptides. And they're short-acting and unique. They're not like hormones, where they sit around and they can have more of a harsh effect, they can have more signaling effect like where there's a hormonal cascade if you will, that's called the hormonal milieu. Like, where one hormone affects another hormone, affects another hormone. What's cool about peptides is they tend to be very clean. And so, there's just a turn on/turn off kind of thing, which makes them a lot more reasonable to use. And it's a lot better than the way a lot of drugs work like which is typically blocking an enzyme that creates a lot of side effects. So you see all these commercials of the 600 side effects. It's just not an ideal way to get a result from the body.

So these peptides are getting very popular. The problem is they can't be patented. And for that reason, they're just considered research chemicals, not approved for actual use on humans because then that's considered a drug. So, they're just getting sold on the internet. So you have to be careful of where you get them from. I work with a medical doctor that's progressive enough to start using some of these incredible compounds, but you do wanna make sure you're getting them from a clean place. The best one that I've seen that he uses and he's tested is Peptide Sciences. So that's the best place to get it. Now a lot of these peptides, your body, if you were to take them orally, would break them down into those amino acid components, and they wouldn't have the signaling effect, this on-off effect that they would. So you need to inject most of them. So that's another factor here. So, you might need to get what's called bacteria static water, hydrate the ampule, and then you pull it in and inject it. Now you don't have to inject these necessarily intravenously. It's, you know, a little insulin needle. And just like underneath the skin, subcutaneous. So, it doesn't hurt. It's not hard to do.

But yes, these compounds, I mean, just to name a few like BPC-157, TB-500 are powerful for anti-inflammation and healing. Thymosin alpha, like, boosts the immune system and might help someone overcome things like Epstein-Barr, Lyme's, you know, a host of autoimmune issues. There's things that promote...you can actually take GHRH, which helps release more growth hormone and release it in its normal pulsatile way, which is about six to seven times a day, instead of just taking growth hormone itself, which is

not as good where you're just taking a bolus of it, and it's kind of going way high and then way low. So, there's compounds like Dihexa and Cerebrolysin, which help promote brain health and help neuroplasticity, essentially making the brain younger. There's some anti-aging compounds like Epitalon that are powerful as well.

There's a number of them that we're discovering in the body, that, again, just because the way that they're made, they really can't be patented. So, you know, the drug companies really aren't working on them. But there's some of the most profound compounds for eliciting an effect in healing us. So it's a fascinating area of medicine right now that is definitely worth looking into, and I would look for a doctor that does do work like that. And again, I work with Dr. Daniel Stickler and Mickra Hamilton of Apeiron in Austin. I know that's one. There are some others throughout the country. So that's something to look at.

Katie: Awesome. Yeah, like I said, this is an area I'm just starting to experiment, so we can circle back in another episode about that soon. And I always ask at the end, you've been on recently, so I asked about books that really dramatically impacted your life. This time, I would love to just hear any book recommendations you have across the board. Obviously, I recommend yours, and that's been a focus of today. But any other fun books you've read recently?

Shawn: Well, the books that I would really, really recommend is going to be..."The Four Agreements" was probably the most impactful book for me, especially learning to...don't take anything personally. That was profound for me that people are just projecting out on you, and you project out on other people. You put your judgment and your lens out on other people. And especially with plant medicine, I've learned to know that I have my lens and I am unique, and I don't need to be projecting out on other people. I don't need to be judging other people. And then when people say those things to me that it's coming through their lens. And so that's been important.

"The Obstacle Is The Way" was incredibly important to me for shifting my mindset. I do like biohacking, so I love Ben Greenfield's book, "Boundless." It's a gigantic book that's wonderful. Those are some of the ones, like, off the top of my head. I'm trying to think of what else. "Deep Work" by Cal Newport is something that I was, kind of, touching on before, and "Tools of Titans" is something that I mentioned before. It's great to read these short, kind of, summaries of all the people that Tim Ferriss had on and, kind of, get a view of excellence and to see the thread that runs through them, as well as what's unique to each of them and what you wanna adopt from your perspective. So, those are some great books that I've read.

Katie: Awesome. I'm putting links to all of those in the show notes as well. But Shawn, with the promise of let's do this again another time soon, thank you for your time today. It's always so much fun to learn from you and chat with you.

Shawn: Awesome. Thank you so much. I appreciate being on. And yes, I'm excited about my book. And it's really like about 20 years in the making, and everything I've learned, and how to get more energy out of my

life, and that continues to evolve. But there's a lot of research in there. There's a lot of mindset in there, and practical ways to execute it, the things you actually want to buy that I've learned, the supplements that you need. Yeah, so I'm really proud that there's a lot of practical side of this of, like, "Okay, now what do I do?" Like, I get into that. There's chapter summaries, there's surveys. So it's very practical. You can just pick it up and start using it.

Katie: Amazing. Well, I'll make sure it's linked. You guys all check it out. It's awesome. And Shawn, we'll chat again soon. Thanks for today. And thanks to all of you guys for listening, for sharing your most valuable resource, your time, with both of us today. We don't take that lightly. 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.