



Episode 460: Seth Conger on Functional Medicine and Growing a Clinical Practice (for Practitioners)

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Katie: Hi, 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. And this episode is more geared towards any health practitioners, coaches, functional medicine doctors, anyone in that world who happens to be listening. I know there are quite a few of you guys from when we've taken surveys. And I wanted to provide resource that would be specific to you guys, and both in the business side and also in maximizing patient outcomes.

And I'm here with Seth Conger, who has been a business leader and innovator in the functional medicine world since 2013. And he's helped bring businesses to seven figures and beyond and put them up for sale. And he also created a cognitive decline and Alzheimer's startup that was geared at helping people in those spaces.

He's now the COO of something called Freedom Practice Coaching, which is geared towards practitioners and helping them maximize business and client outcome. And we go deep on that today. He gives some practical tools and we also talk a lot about functional medicine, in general, and medicine and the direction it should hopefully go over the next few decades. So definitely a worthwhile episode, especially if you are in the health and wellness world. And without further ado, let's join Seth. Seth, welcome to the podcast.

Seth: Hey, Katie. So good to be here, I'm really glad to see you.

Katie: Glad to see you, too. I know you in real life, and it's always a joy to chat with you. I'm glad we get to record this one and share with others as well. For people who aren't familiar with you, I know this conversation like all of ours is gonna be probably wide-ranging and extremely impactful, and with some really practical advice as well. But I always love to start broad and hear the story of the guests a little bit first. From my initial research, I have a note here that you use to drive semi-trucks and you might be the only former truck driver who also is published in a peer-reviewed medical journal. So I would love to hear a little bit about just that jump in general and what the peer-reviewed medical journal was about.

Seth: Yeah, that's my claim to fame and usually, the thing that gets me into parties, I guess. I have a very interesting background. And I was a truck driver for a marketing company, worked for one of the largest marketing companies, event marketing companies in the world in Chicago. And they had us going all over the country to these huge events. So think NASCAR, NFL. I did ESPN Monday Night Football for an entire season. And at one point, they came to us and there was a huge budget oversight. And they could no longer pay for people to fly around the country and manage the tours and also for the truck drivers to move the things from event to event. And so they, kind of, surprised a few of us and said, "You get to keep your job, but surprise, you have to go to truck driver school." And it ended up being just an incredible opportunity that, of course, I was highly resistant to. I didn't wanna be a truck driver. I had this whole connotation and belief about what truck drivers were.

And instead, it turned out that I ended up getting to keep a motorcycle in the back of the truck and drive through all 48 of the lower states and ride my motorcycle everywhere, listen to audiobooks. That's when I really got caught up with crazy topics about, like, physics and health, and took a huge deep dive into functional health at that point just through my own education and learning. I never would have had that time otherwise. Coming off of the road, I ended up meeting a phenomenal girl who's now my wife, and her dad ran a functional medicine practice. He was looking to expand and needed some marketing help. He is working 4 to 5 days a week, had a 100% referral business but wanted to eventually get to a point where he can exit out of that. And he knew if it was referrals only, that was fantastic for a lifestyle business but there was no way to actually grow or scale that or get to a point where he wanted to exit.

And so, I jumped in just to do a little marketing help. Next thing you know, we decided to put a whole new division on the business, which was our brain function division, which kind of brings me to the latter end of my career of what I've been doing. We didn't have anybody to manage that division. And so I jumped straight in

and ended up getting certified in neurofeedback and biofeedback and just fell in love with this area of functional and integrative medicine, and then also the whole different, like, functional neurology side. So, being a non-practitioner but having an economics background, which is what my degree is in, and then having that long-term marketing background allowed me to ask very interesting and very different questions, break through walls that people thought were harder barriers, rather than being able to do things differently and eventually allowed us to set up a completely different model that looked very dissimilar to what was going on in functional and integrative medicine and, kind of, paving a new way that ended up getting us not only better profits and eventually to the exit point that my father-in-law was looking for, but also actually better clinical outcomes on the other side. And so, that ended back in 2019 with a publication. I was part of Dale Bredesen's 100 patients for reversing cognitive decline, which was in the "Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinsonism," and was the only non-doctor on that paper. And it was pretty exciting to see that, especially with my family having a history of Alzheimer's.

Katie: Yeah, it's always special, especially when you have that special family connection. And with your story, I definitely am on the same page with you. I love driving for the audiobooks and podcasts. I don't get to drive nearly as much as I used to. I miss that part of it. And I've also been on a deep nerdy dive into physics lately.

Seth: Yeah, it's fun, isn't it?

Katie: Yeah. And I really resonate with what you're saying as well. I think this will probably guide a lot of this conversation actually that idea that creating a new model, taking a new approach and almost, like, going back to first principles and working a whole new model versus just trying to marginally improve on the existing systems. And I think that's something that's so valid across many industries and now we're seeing it happen in the health and wellness world more. I think it desperately needs to happen in education. And I'm working on that front as well. But I think that's where we see the most change and the most rapid change is when we're able to work backwards to figure out where the first principles truly lie and then create new models that address things in new ways versus just trying to, like, marginally improve the percentages of what we're looking at. And I think that's one advantage to functional medicine, in a sense, is that it goes down to the root cause and really approaches it from that multifaceted approach versus just trying to marginally improve based on labs or common metrics. And I feel like for that reason, that you probably bring a whole lot of different perspective to the industry, especially coming from the non-medical background and with more of that marketing mind.

Seth: Yeah, so, I think you're hitting the nail right on the head. When you do look at functional integrative medicine or lifestyle medicine alternative, any holistic, whatever we wanna call it, it's so interesting because the way we approach the health side is vastly different. We're looking for the root cause. We are coaching and guiding our patients along. We are dealing with supplements instead of medications in many standpoints. We're working with energy and the mind, body, and soul. There's so much that's different over there, yet many practitioners fall into the trap of trying to run their business the same way they did when they were in a hospital setting or working for a big group. So, instead of getting your insurance billed for the 7 minutes that you spend with a client, you're now spending 45 minutes or an hour with a client and charging them cash for

that time. You're selling your supplements separately or selling your labs separately. Many practitioners make a significant portion of their margins by up-selling supplements and upselling labs and, you know, taking that margin in there.

And when you look at it from a different perspective, you take a look at this business model and you say, well, this is just the same thing as the old model, yet it's a totally new approach to health. And so why can't we change both of them to actually match that to be better for the end-user, which is the patient who not only the patient wants to get better, but the clinician and practitioner, they also want them to get better. So, we took a real big look at that a few years ago and ended up seeing that, you know, there was a couple of different separations in this functional and integrative world.

There were all the doctors who were doing it the same way as they used to just in their own practice. And they seem to be, kind of, struggling unless they had a really good name in the community. We have the celebrity doctors who are writing the books. They were white-labeling the supplements and they had all of the...you know, now it's, you know, the online trainings and everything else, but we had those. And then there was somewhere in the middle. And it was the ones who were being successful and seeing more in their practice and taking that time to really focus on their business and focus on themselves, not just trying to approach health differently than they did when they were in practice. And so that's, kind of, what we modeled after. And much more in line with what I'm actually doing today and where I've focused my career over the last five years is trying to reinvent the business side of functional and integrative medicine.

Katie: And that's one of the reasons I was excited to chat with you today. There's actually a large segment of the listening audience here that are health practitioners in some form or health entrepreneurs or are in this world in some way. And it's always really fun and exciting to me to share with so many other entrepreneurs. And I think what you touched on is so, so important because I think we're in this, kind of, interesting place where, you know, functional medicine is still...functional integrative medicine, people still don't totally know what to do with them. And there's those of us who have had amazing recoveries, thanks to these modalities. And we're so grateful, but I feel like the mainstream is still struggling to catch on. And like you said, it's being compared to the mainstream model.

And certainly, I can't think of any area where we need to more go back to the first principles and completely innovate than in medicine when we're looking at just the standard of care conventional medicine and the outcomes they're getting. And, you know, you always hear it said it's very cliché, like, in a trauma, like, critical emergent care situation, it's great to be in the U.S. Our emergency doctors are amazing. But when you come from that mindset, and you're used to acute, okay, someone is bleeding, someone needs surgery, that's a totally different mode of practicing than when you're talking about chronic disease or someone who has a really hard-to-identify problem. And that's where functional medicine is able to shine so much. I'm curious, what do you think it would take in today's society for functional medicine to really gain traction and gain respect in being able to address these things, not just as well as but better than conventional medicine in many ways?

Seth: Yeah. So I think that, you know, in conventional medicine, there's kind of two sides, right? There's this acute care model that they have and then there's the scientists who are doing the research. And we've developed this gold standard as the double-blind placebo-controlled randomized clinical trial where if it hasn't passed that and doesn't have 10 years of research behind it, then it can't be a gold standard of care. And unfortunately, that breaks down when you're looking at anything outside of just a pill or a single supplement. When you're looking at lifestyle care and you're actually looking at the person's environment and their diet with nutrition, their exercise, mindfulness, all these other places with lifestyle, the way those clinical trials work break down. And unfortunately, there's just not enough case studies that are done in the same manner.

And so, I really believe that we need to start grouping together and actually putting out some real data and some real science by using the same models and producing those case studies at very, very high amounts for different disease processes, but more importantly, just for individuals showing improvements in their health regardless of disease process to allow people to understand that it's not just anecdotes and they don't have to go, you know, see somebody who just wrote a book on this but rather there are phenomenal practitioners all over the United States, tens of thousands of them, who know how to do this, they're just not collaborating very well with each other in their community. And so, we are really trying to help out drive some more community interest and community participation in the functional and integrative world across all different practitioner types to see what we can do about starting to build those standards of care, starting to really create large amounts of case studies so that people can see that and say, "Wow, this whole industry as a whole is working really well with us."

And I think that's a proactive approach that we can take as businesses for a proactive approach to health because that's what we're asking people to do. You know, in so many of these cases, when we look at any chronic disease, it's not gonna change overnight. So it's the opposite of taking a pill and then just sitting back and not doing anything. So I think adherence is really one of the largest issues in this area. And adherence can work so much better when you start developing tools and tactics around a single practitioner to allow that patient to have an easier time to follow the model that you're asking them to follow, whether that's adherence to just taking the right supplements on a daily basis or adherence to a specific diet plan or exercise regimen.

Those things really need to fit together altogether, whether it's bringing in a health coach to your practice or packaging your services and creating a program rather than just charging per hour and expecting your patient to do everything on their own, creating educational curriculum so that they can follow through online, rather than having to go to Google every time they're trying to think, you know, does food fit into the diet plan that was recommended? So I think there's so much we can do around that as a community, not necessarily setting...when I talk about standards of care, it's not clinical standards of care. It's really that standard model that that increases that adherence and allows for clients to get to a destination that they wanna get to, rather than just a whole bunch of services and products that we're throwing at them.

Katie: Yeah, that makes sense. And like you touched on, I very firmly believe, and I've said this on here before, that we are each, at the end of the day, our own primary healthcare provider. And we wanna collaborate with practitioners who have specialization and knowledge that we don't have. But the best outcomes happen when you have that collaborative focus and you have a patient who understands their responsibility in that equation and a practitioner who respects the patient's autonomy in that equation. And that's where you get these amazing outcomes. And that also allows us to delve into the personalization side, which, of course, has been talked about in the health world a lot and increasingly so the last few years. And I hope will start bringing more and more light to this idea that, you know, double-blind clinical studies, of course, have their place but like you said, they break down when you're talking anything outside of pharmaceutical interventions or surgical interventions, and they discount...You know, like, you hear doctors talk cynically about an N of 1 study or someone's anecdotal experience, but if you are the patient having that experience, that is 100% happening for you, and it's very valid.

And so it really excites me to see in functional medicine, how much more respect there is in that relationship back and forth. And I think that's probably one of the reasons we see such incredible outcome so often in functional medicine. And I love that you tied in the adherence component as well because I feel like this is probably one of the biggest hurdles to tackle both on the patient side when I was trying to make health changes, actually sticking to them. And I'm sure a frustration for functional medicine doctors, who know what's gonna help someone is getting them to actually do it because even a functional medicine doctor is only with you for that short amount of time. And then the patient is the one who has to go home and integrate. So, talk to some more about that and the systems because I think that's such a key point to actually changing patient outcomes. And I love that you've broken away from the conversation of just, you know, profitability and clinical setting and doctors making money via insurance and into, like, how are we actually getting outcomes, and then benefiting both the practitioner and the patient in that equation?

Seth: Yeah. So, Katie, I've currently evolved in my professional world, and I'm now the chief operating officer of a company called Freedom Practice Coaching. Been around for almost 10 years. I was actually a client of theirs. So when we were on the search for, how do we find a better model that's going to allow us to not only bring in more revenue, but also get our owner out of the driver's seat and back into a position where he can work a couple of days a week, and then, you know, boost this thing up and get ready for an exit? We were a client of Freedom Practice Coaching, and then I've come on, you know, multiple years later found myself in the driver's seat over there, which is fantastic. And so a few of the things that I'll talk about I'm taking from the models that we actually teach our clients, but they can be applied, kind of, across the board.

But, you know, I think that there's an unfortunate thing that happens in functional and integrative medicine. We have these doctors who are coming out of...they're working in a hospital setting or specialist setting, then maybe they have a private practice that takes insurance and they try to switch over, or a health coach that is going from, you know, any other different area of their life, who's decided they wanna focus in health, and then move into that. Nurse practitioners, naturopaths, etc., they get very, very little business education. What we teach is actually very advanced business and programmatics that you and I will talk about today. But there's this gap of the basic, basic business information. So you see doctors and practitioners trying to be entrepreneurs without actually having any of that information in the beginning. And I think that's a real hurdle

that we must start approaching, getting people up to at least a basic level so that, you know, doing their books and reading a P&L and understanding when to hire and how to hire are things that practitioners, you know, should get before they ever decide to open up a business.

From that point going forward, I think that there's a very clear model of how to hit upon all those things that we were just talking about with the standards of care, with building up those case studies, with working with your community, and when making that deeper, deeper connection. And a lot of it really focuses on slowing down and providing more education to your community. And the individuals who may wanna come see you before they're actually coming to your door. So, a lot of people just try to drive people you know, through a Facebook ad directly to a website and hope they'll pick up the phone and then just come for a visit. And unfortunately, that doesn't nurture enough or create a relationship enough where that person may be with you for a long term. If you're doing that, you can easily get \$175 or \$500, or whatever your first visit is, but the chances of that person moving forward and creating not only long-term value for your company but long-term value for their health is highly diminished.

And so, what I really would like people to focus on if they can take one thing away from this is spending more time educating their community and educating the individuals who are picking up the phone and calling them wanting their services to make sure that they're a good fit for each other. And then spending that time diving in, creating that emotional connection, right, because we're trying to get to a destination, that's the single biggest difference between, say, functional and allopathic medicine is that we're trying to get to a destination with chronic disease and improve their life across all categories. And if you haven't set up that emotional connection, the chances of that person falling off before they can get there is really, really high. And so I think spending more time educating about what the commitment level is going to be, what the things they need to change in their lifestyle, decisions that they'll have to make, participation from their family members, and friends, and helping them along on that journey, really the differences between functional medicine and allopathic medicine.

And then, of course, that emotional connection that ties you two together or ties that individual patient to the other members of your team or you as a health coach who is a practitioner and you as even a trainer, that's what's gonna help get that person to the point where they're really committed to follow through on something bigger. And then we can talk even more about what happens after that, which is, you know, really creating programs including everything someone needs to get to a destination and then memberships afterwards rather than just asking them pull out their credit card every single time for whatever you feel like you need them to buy at that point.

Katie: That makes a lot of sense. Okay, so to get a little more granular for any of the practitioners, health coaches, etc. who are listening, I know this can be a tough point. I'm friends with many people in this world and that can be a tough point, especially because so many of them have such a huge heart. And they just genuinely want to help everybody. And they realize eventually the limits of their own time and that they themselves cannot spend hours a day as much as they would like to with every single one of their patients. And so, it seems like this very much is a very heart-centered and helpful long-term approach for them to be

able to get across so much more of the things that the patient is actually gonna need to succeed in a way that resonates, helps them adhere to the program, and also helps the practitioner not get so overwhelmed.

I know practitioner burnout is a huge problem in the medical world, but also in the health coach and functional medicine world because of that huge heart. I firmly believe doctors share that as well. I don't think anyone goes to medical school and makes it through all of that just to make money. Every doctor I know has a huge heart. And so I think like this helps really address those two pain points and helps practitioners of all sorts avoid burnout, and be able to keep providing value and help to all of their patients. So to get a little bit more granular, walk us through some of the specifics of what you guys do and how you take a practitioner through that.

Seth: Yeah, so I think the first overarching thing and a comment that I would like everybody to sit and reflect on right now is, are you valuing your own services? Whatever those services are, you know what they can do to your patients, you know the outcomes you can get. You know, first of all, we'll talk about how you're setting up those services to ensure that you're able to get that person to the destination that they wanna get to. But first of all, how are you valuing yourself? I think a lot of practitioners really have a poverty mindset when it comes to medicine. You know, they think, even though they own their own business now, like, if insurance is...you know, insurance used to cover these services, so how can I possibly charge for this or charge a high enough dollar that allows me to be a really successful entrepreneur? And I'd like you to rethink that because the more you value your own services and where you know you can get somebody to that destination, to that outcome, you can really, really change their life, you should be valuing your own services that way. And this comes back to the pre-education part, your patient should be able to understand that and value them the same as you. They should see that as a priceless opportunity that you're offering them, not as a dollar amount on a page.

And so this really comes into, kind of, packaging your services and creating programs so that they're not literally comparing you to the dollar per hour or rate of a practitioner next door or somebody that they used to see over here or what they think their insurance would pay for or what it doesn't. They won't start, you know, comparing the supplements that are your high-grade supplements that you've spent so long trying to find versus the supplements at Costco or GNC just because they think they can buy them for less. And they'll really start understanding and diving into that value. So the first thing is, how do you value yourself? How do you value your really priceless services that you're offering your community and your patients?

Moving from there, getting a little bit more granular is, after the educational portion, developing programs that include everything you need to get that person to the destination, and not being scared to put the things into that program that are actually gonna help them get there. If you believe they're gonna need \$600 worth of supplements a month, you should include that in a program. If you think it's gonna take three months or six months or nine months to get them to where they wanna go, build that out ahead of time, really understand what are the labs and diagnostics you're going to have to run and how many times you're gonna have to run them to ensure that you're giving them the utmost care? How many times do you need to see them? Do they need a health coach or another practitioner to hold their hand and make sure that they're gonna be able to get there? You know, do you wanna tell them that they're going to need a membership to Calm or, you know,

a different meditation app that they're gonna go through? Really think through, what is this person going to need to get to the destination they wanna get to that I believe I can help guide them to? And build a program around that.

That's one of the things that we help practitioners do in many different areas of Freedom Practice Coaching. That was the main change for the business that I managed back in back in North Carolina is we were able to change things around from just fee-for-service to programs and allowed us to have people getting that destination over a six month period of time or even a three-month period of time and ensure that that regular revenue coming in every single month so we weren't constantly reactive in our business. We could be proactive two, three months down the line. It's not like we had a giant waiting list. We weren't proactive like that because we didn't feel it was proper to have people sitting around on a waiting list. We would hire more practitioners and, you know, keep the ball rolling. But it allowed us to really recognize, okay, if we're safe and comfortable in our business, what more can we be giving our clients? How can we iterate? How can we really just build up the services and keep creating value to get people to where they wanna go faster and more simpler?

But I think it's just taking a step back, creating that emotional relationship and then painting that picture for your patients, whether you're a health coach or a medical doctor, you know, any level of service, you're painting that picture of where they wanna go, that destination that you want them to get to that they agree, they're willing to do anything to get to that destination, and then just working back from there to let them know, this is everything that's required. And, you know, it's set up that way in every other business. And in every other different industry and economy, we would not...You know, if we wanted to get our Master's in economics, we would know exactly what we're signing up for and committing to before we paid for that. We would know it's a two-year commitment. We know that we have to take this many credits. We know we have to buy all these books. We're gonna have a teacher. We're gonna have group study. We need to allocate 10 to 20 hours a week directly to this. And we have to start thinking about approaching these cases in functional integrative medicine more like a Master's level course versus just somebody walking into a store and buying a product because it's on a nice stand.

So, I think they're approaching it from that direction and really looking at that long-term relationship with your patients and getting them to a destination rather than just seeing what you can get for the dollar amount is going to work for the heart of all the practitioners because that's why they're in it. It allows them to get the better results with their patients. It allows them to feel better about it and allows them to love themselves and value themselves and value their employees and their team members by knowing ahead of time what kind of revenue they're going to get and how they can better support the community around them.

Katie: And I would guess when people make that switch, they see a pretty profound result, both in their business model and also in their client outcomes. Are you able to...? I'm sure you can't share specific patient outcomes but can you share some kind of general ideas of the results that you guys see?

Seth: Absolutely. So I can give some examples from the practice that I was the COO of for a number of years. We had great outcomes and great testimonials over time for the practitioners that we worked with. But we were never able to actually, like, compile them into case studies because we would never build in post-diagnostics or post-interviews. And so, we just didn't have that information because who wants to go pay for more labs or another brain scan or something else or, you know, once they're done and we've created victory, who's gonna go out and fill out a bunch of clinical questionnaires? Once we changed over to programs, we would get that on 75% of the people. We would have this amazing pre and post-data, objective data to match up with their subjective testimonial of how they felt. And we started getting those by the dozens and then the hundreds with people who never would have complied with that length of treatment. We worked with a number of former NFL players with traumatic brain injuries, some massive changes in their life. And these are people who are highly distracted and very sought after, who once they went into a program mentality, they would actually follow through because they were used to somebody saying, "You have to do this for this long, this many things and fill out these," and they're like, "Yes, I've got it. This is how I can work."

So we started getting not only better clinical outcomes but objective measures from every one of those clinical outcomes. So that improved greatly. The number of patients that were coming through the door, that went up marginally but the revenue we were getting and the clinical outcomes on the same side went up drastically. When we joined Freedom Practice Coaching, we ended up going from a little bit under seven figures a month to the mid-seven figures per month, or I'm sorry, mid-six figures per month, which was just incredible to make that leap over a short about year-and-a-half, two-year period of time of iterating this over and over again and at the same time, those clinical measures went through the roof.

Freedom Practice Coaching doctors find that quite often that in the first three to six months after they have the foundations down, after they've learned how to do a presentation, speak from stage and have that emotional connection, we build out the messaging, we create those programs, they see a huge leap. You know, even if they already have quite a large herd or a large list of people coming to them, they see that massive leap in both revenue, profit, but also most importantly, the clinical outcomes that they're getting because they can then objectively see this is what's changing. Here's how someone's A1C moved and their weight. And some of our practitioners even give out continuous glucose monitors or other measurements, Oura Rings, things like that to really get objective measurements and they build in the time to actually analyze that data. So it's so cool. And we do that...we're working on initiatives of how do we take a grouping of those clinical measures in, say, one or two different areas and start building up those case studies and putting that model out to the rest of the community so others can participate in that and then maybe get some attention of larger groups when we start chipping away at that model.

So I think it's, you know, just huge improvements fairly quickly. But, again, you know, I think everybody is also...the same way that the patients looking for that quick fix and health, the practitioner's looking for the quick fix with their business. And they're thinking, you know, they can change one thing like marketing. If I just get marketing right, if I just get Facebook ads right, everything will work out for me. And really what they need is they need a whole model. They need to be putting in a year, two, three years of time to build up their business the right way, the way that anybody else would be putting in that time if they were creating a business. It's not different just because it's a medical practice or a health coaching business.

So the fundamentals need to be created. All the other pieces of how you create those programs and ongoing memberships, the partnerships with the right vendors from marketing companies, to supplement companies, to lab companies, all of those really need to be figured out and coordinated, let alone the technology stack now that we're in a virtual care world. And I don't think people have the ability to just do that on their own. What they really need is a program for that and then that ongoing coaching to help them move in the right direction, just like we all know that patients need that coaching, not just a prescription, but they actually need guidance and coaching to get them to that destination.

Katie: Yeah, that makes complete sense. For any of the practitioners listening, I'll make sure to put a link in the show notes, but let us know, where can people find out more about going deeper with you guys there?

Seth: Yeah, so they can go to our website, which is freedompracticecoaching.com. And, Katie, in the show notes, will put a direct link so that people can actually... We wanna give out a blueprint guide of how to create programs and packaged services, which I think is probably one of the key things that we've talked about today. If they do just that, it's going to elevate and give them that space and that room with the current clients that are coming in to allow them to breathe and take some more time and then focus on their business more. So we have about a 14-page guide that shows them exactly step by step how to package their services, what should be in there, what the margins should be in order to build their business off of that. And it's a really simple step-by-step guide that we'd love the listeners, if it's applicable for them, to have and be able to work with. So we'll get a direct code for you in the show notes for that.

Katie: Awesome. That'll be at wellnessmama.fm. For any of you guys listening, you can find the link there.

This podcast is sponsored by Joovv red light therapy. I've been a fan of red light therapy since researching it years ago, and have been really grateful for my red light devices the last couple of years as I get older and want to be proactive about keeping my skin looking young! With stress and travel, I felt my skin getting less smooth and elastic than it used to be, so I upped my red light use to help my skin feel its best! I also notice the benefits for recovery and sleep as I've gotten into more intense workouts. Light is such a vital part of the cellular energy equation in the body and red light therapy is an easy way to get this vital piece. Since many of us spend so much time indoors, we often don't get enough light. Spending some time outdoors each morning and using red light at night are my go-to's for making sure my body's light exposure is optimized. Learn more and see the light I use at joovv.com/wellnessmama. And they've built in an exclusive Wellness Mama discount at above link!

This podcast is brought to you by Just Thrive, a company near and dear to my heart (and my gut). Gut health really is connected to everything, and in today's world, we encounter a lot of things that tend to mess with our gut bacteria, from food to stress and even environmental toxins. The gut has been called the second brain

with good reason. We learn more each day about it's vital role in all aspects of health. Just Thrive probiotic is the first one I've seen and felt a noticeable difference from almost immediately, with their patented *Bacillus Indicus* HU36 strain that helps turn your gut into an antioxidant factory so it's working all the time to benefit you. Since focusing on my gut and making these a regular part of my life, I've seen digestive and skin changes. Just Thrive probiotic is vegan, dairy free, histamine free, non-GMO, and is made without soy, sugar, salt, corn, nuts or gluten, so it's safe for practically everyone... I even sprinkle it in my kids' food and bake it into products since it can survive at up to 450 degrees! You want a probiotic that can survive in high temperature, otherwise it wouldn't survive in the temperatures in your digestive system. I actually love all of their products and have been especially enjoying their prebiotic drink, which is absolutely delicious too! Check them out at justthrivehealth.com/wellnessmama and use the code `wellnessmama15` to save 15% at checkout.

I also wanna just touch on a little bit, I can tell obviously, how passionate you are about this. And I love that this is a thing that's happening in the world. I also knew you before, I knew about your work in the Alzheimer's space. So I would love to get an update on, kind of, an overview of what you were doing with that. And I mean, why this was...It seems like a perfect and amazing pivot for you but I just wanted to touch on the Alzheimer's side as well because it was so cool what you were doing with that.

Seth: Yeah, thanks, Katie. So, when I joined the practice I was with in North Carolina, one of the first things I talked about, that neuro division, the brain function division that we had, the first thing that happened to me was we had this equipment, which was a QEG. So it actually takes a brain map of you. And I was the guinea pig for it. So we took the brain map and we sent it off to a neurologist, and I got a phone call the next day and this neurologist said, "How many head injuries do you have?" And I said, "Well, none recently. Why?" And he said, "How many have you had over the course of your life?" I said, "Well, I had a number senior year of high school. I got into two skiing accidents." One, I took a pole in the face at 60 miles an hour. I was a competitive ski racer. Growing up in Maine, I used to race against Bode Miller in high school. And I had two head injuries in about a two-week period of time. And then I played lacrosse right after that and had three concussions in that.

My life drastically changed at that point. I was being recruited for Division 1 ski racing. I was going to go pre-med and basically making a decision between do I want to be an Olympic-level ski racer or do I wanna become a doctor? I made a promise to my grandfather at age 6 that I'd become a doctor to help him with his health issues. And my life drastically shifted after the head injuries. I did your typical senior slide, which everybody said, "Oh, you know, you're a senior in high school, that's what happens." My parents had split up. And so the depression and the anxiety started to kick in and everyone said, "Well, your parents just split up, so it must be that." And then, of course, I went off to college with new people and in a new environment when I didn't know anyone. And everyone said, "Well, your behavior is changing because you just went off to college and this is what happens."

But I knew something wasn't right. I wasn't sleeping at night, yet I was sleeping through classes during the day. I couldn't focus on anything. And I went to a number of different doctors and practitioners and was just blown off by everybody. And finally, was told by the dean of students that I just wasn't smart enough to go down the pre-med track. And if I wanted to stay in the college, I had to switch over to something a little bit easier, like

business. And I chose the economics route, which turns out wasn't that much easier. But it was at least less schooling, which, of course, ended up bringing me back around to jumping into functional medicine. But I found a modality that could actually help me. And through using a number of different things, right, we put together a program, it wasn't just one thing, but we did some neurofeedback and biofeedback, we did a lot of different supplements, some replacement therapies, exercise, changed my diet around, the whole works.

And with that, my brain function ended up improving substantially. I actually have objective markers using a brain function test that showed my processing speed, which is kind of like the speed of the CPU in your brain, was at 35% when I started my program. It went to the 99th percentile and has stayed there since. So just incredible improvement. It opened up my mind and my life. And I realized at that point, I had been struggling so much and hiding from this whole world. I had changed my behaviors, my emotions, the way I showed up in the world because I didn't want anybody to know that I was damaged. At the same time that I was going through that, I watched my grandmother pass with Alzheimer's. And I can remember the day that she forgot who I was. A few years after she passed, my grandfather took his own life because he was starting to head down the same path. He had something called mild cognitive impairment, which is a precursor to Alzheimer's disease.

So, after our success at the clinic in Charlotte with brain function modalities and putting these programs together, I had this ambition to start something specifically in that space because I saw that people were not creating the programs and services that were great enough to actually get the results that they needed with someone whose brain is actively degenerating and you're in a race against time. So we created a company. It was a venture-backed company. A lot of people in the functional and integrative space supported that company. I'm so grateful for them taking the chance on that. We started it in mid-2019 and piloted everything else. We built a bunch of technology on the back end to take a lot of disparate data points and compare them together. So think about taking QEGs, and brain function tests, and functional MRIs, and then nine different lab companies' data, all the markers that we needed to predict what was going on, what was driving the decline, whether it was the gut or someone's amino acids, or whether it was the fact that they weren't training their brain enough, all of those different pieces we had to look at to be able to develop a personalized program for them.

We piloted that out and the launch date was actually April 1, 2020. I remember sitting with our lead investor here in Boulder, Colorado celebrating that we had all the rest of the investment locked and loaded and was gonna close at the end of the month on March 31st and we were gonna launch our services the next day. We had a contract with a great doctor in the space who's really known for this and then all of a sudden, COVID hit. And unfortunately for us, it delayed a lot of things over a number of months. We had worked so hard up to that point and we kept it going for another six months after that. But what we realized unfortunately was, it wasn't about the investment dollars that came in our entire customer acquisition strategy had been erased because all of a sudden, we had individuals who were impaired in their thinking and decision-making skills who are highly, highly fearful of COVID and didn't wanna do anything that involved a long commitment or substantial amount of money. So all the people who had committed to us that they would go through this program beforehand dropped out.

And instead of bringing in one out of four individuals who we got on the phone with, it went to more, like, 1 out of 15 individuals who are willing to take the chance. And unfortunately, timing-wise, the bottom dropped out of that and we had to make a very difficult decision to cease operations of that. Even though it was a phenomenal service, a phenomenal product, was gonna help so many people, it was the wrong timing and we were trying to piece things together too much. And I think that it was very difficult on me as an entrepreneur, as the CEO of that to look at this and watch, kind of, the bottom fall out right as we are about to celebrate. And I think that's an important lesson to people that it's timing and things that happen in the world have a whole lot to do with your business success, or health success, or your marriage success or anything else. And you have to build in this flexibility for that to happen and you don't have to think of it as a failure if it doesn't go the way you believe.

Interestingly enough, we're doing a lot of things on the Freedom Practice Coaching side now that my experience over the past two years of running a startup in the pre-Alzheimer's space are really kind of blurring together. And it's creating just an amazing opportunity for the...We have about 500 doctors that we've worked with over the past 10 years. We're about to create amazing opportunities for them to really up-level their stuff in this clinical space. And instead of having, you know, 1 clinic and 1 business, I now can touch 500 of them and start creating that community that you and I talked about in the beginning, where we can up-level those standards of business standards of care, bring the community together and start taking this whole world of functional and integrative medicine, and starting to put it up on a pedestal and separating it even more from the conventional or allopathic medicine in the eyes of the consumer.

So, that space was amazing. I mean, we were looking at over 1,000 different data points to come up with the 50 different areas that somebody could be deficient in that could be leading their brain towards decline and building those programs out. There's some people in this space that are doing amazing work there and continue to do amazing work. And we're gonna be very supportive of them in that. But it's an area that's very close to my heart and we're excited that now we have a much, much greater community to start driving some of those underlying principles and ideas and thoughts that we had on a much, much larger platform to ensure that the mission and the vision that I had was just on pause for a few minutes. It didn't actually die on the vine.

Katie: And I can only imagine how that's gonna have such beneficial ripples going forward because all the practitioners are also learning to navigate in a post-COVID world. And with all the changes in practice and that gives you a frontline seat to navigate a lot of that firsthand, and I'm sure will have paid many dividends to everybody that you're working with now, as hard as that probably was to navigate at the time. I'm sure there was so much wonderful in that that's going to revolt to so many other people now.

Seth: I think so. And, you know, it's so funny because it brought us together and now we're on this platform talking about it. We're starting to establish some fantastic partnerships in the space, Wellnesse is one of them, and making sure that our providers have access to the highest quality consumer goods. And, you know, all

those different little pieces that are actually really big pieces, when you take a step back and you say, "Hey, you know, you don't have to go out and scour the globe for all these things anymore. We can help provide the best in class across all the different verticals to our clients and help building that community and really, really pushing the gas down and holding businesses in this space to a higher standard," right, a much higher standard that we're doing the right things. And we're all growing this together as a much, much larger community. And I think that's most important to the future of functional and integrative medicine.

Katie: Absolutely. And a question I love to ask toward the end of interviews is on a personal level or could be from clinical experience as well, what are some of the things that you do routinely for your own health or that you consider the biggest needle-movers?

Seth: Wow. So, interestingly, I think the biggest needle-mover in my entire life was taking three weeks off in the month of November. After working an average of 50 to 80 hours a week since age 14, I was basically told day 1 of working at a golf course that if I don't see you sprinting, you're not working. And that carried with me my entire life until finally I realized that with my startup, working 80 hours a week, working 90 hours a week, working 100 hours a week wasn't getting me...working more, working harder was not getting me the benefit that I actually wanted. And taking some time off to do a lot of personal work, reclaim my personal habits, my daily habits was the most important thing I could have ever done, a little mini-sabbatical to reframe my life and understand what's working and what's not. That's the most important thing that I've done in the last year for myself and for my family because I got back to making sure that my business was working for my family, my professional life was supporting my personal life rather than the other way around, which was the last, you know, 20 years of my life.

I have a morning routine that I kind of live and die by. And if I don't get to it, then my day is not great. And if I do, my day seems pretty fantastic. And it's a series of questions that I've cultivated from a number of morning journals and great questions I've heard from coaches over the years. And I do that every single day, that involves some movement work, some breath work, some journaling, and really make sure that I take a full hour for myself in the morning. And if I do that, my day seems pretty fantastic. And then I think the other is, I have been a consummate mastermind and community participant. And I think it's probably the most important thing I've done professionally and personally is joining groups that surrounds me with like-minded individuals who are significantly better and smarter than me in many different ways. And putting myself out there, even with the years and years and years of imposter syndrome that I had, but just shoving myself in those really challenging situations and allowing that to push myself to rise up and then also be a phenomenal backstop when things are going difficult. And I have a group of people who've been there before that I can reach out to.

I know that we've been around the same circles for a number of years, and I think we both find value in that. But I think it's...You know, I have my friendships around here and I have family members and everything else but having those communities has been one of the most powerful things for me for understanding and educating myself in both business and social and personal areas. But also just highly important in keeping my mindset right during the difficult times, having that community. And so I'm very, very focused on continuing to

build community for myself, but also building community for others, making sure that it's highly valuable in not just one area, like building your business, but in so many different areas on the social side and on the personal growth and development side too, and just that emotional backdrop where you have somebody to go to and talk to who's not gonna have any judgment, but actually knows how to help you out of that situation and guide. And so, I think those are the most important things that I've done over the past year for myself health-wise.

Katie: I agree with you completely. I think that community piece is absolutely key, both in a professional sense, and especially in a personal sense, and having those deeply anchored relationships is so important. I've said that many times on this podcast. So I love that you mentioned that as a point. And lastly, if there's a book or a number of books that have had a profound impact on your life, and if so what they are and why?

Seth: Yeah, so most recently, the best book that I've read in the past year is a book called "The Psychology of Money" by Morgan Housel. There is no investment advice whatsoever in it. It is simply about how we think about money, how we think about investing, how the media and other groups and populations drive our thoughts. It was just a...I mean, it blew my mind when I read that book. I would say more than half of it is underlined. So I'm gonna need to go get a new copy and, kind of, pare down the underlines. Not long, I think a little over 100 pages, very simple to read. There's 20 principles in it. It is just a phenomenal, phenomenal book.

And then another one that I think was really helpful for me that I read during my little sabbatical was a less known book called "What's Within You." And it is by a couple of amazing guys who run a company called No Barriers, which is a 501(c)(3). And "What's Within You" is kind of a breakdown of how they run their business, their nonprofit that takes individuals who have had severe hardships and show them that their difficulties don't hold a candle to what they can actually do. And it walks through a step-by-step mix of actually creating a personal vision and a personal mission, which I found enormously powerful because I'd gone through core value work, and mission work, and vision work with multiple different companies, my own, and helping other people do that. But I'd never done it for myself, I'd never actually taken a look and said, "What are my personal core values? What is my personal mission and my personal vision?" And that helped me dramatically shift how I look at how my life is set up and where I prioritize my time, based on now being able to focus on my core values every morning and my core vision and seeing what fits into that and what doesn't. So, those are two recent books that I'd love to recommend. I'm sure I can give recommendations that have been given a number of times of classics and things but I wanted to give two probably lesser-known recommendations, just from amazing, amazing people that I think could really help the audience.

Katie: I love it. Those are both new recommendations. I'll make sure those are linked in the show notes, as well as the link that you mentioned before and some other resources that I have around entrepreneurship and just my take on health coaching. Thank you so much for your time today. Like I said, there's a significant portion of this audience that is in this world. And I hope this provided a lot of value for them. And I'm grateful for your time.

Seth: Thank you so much, Katie. It's just so great to see you again.

Katie: And thanks as always to you guys for listening and sharing your most valuable resources, your time, and your energy with 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.