



Episode 485: Dr. Kanwal Bawa on Overcoming
Cancer, Sexual Health and Biohacking

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast episode is sponsored by Four Sigmatic. My source for superfood drinks that I've been enjoying for years. They like to say that four sigmatic basically means really good for you. And based on loving their products for a long time I have to agree. To share a little bit more about one of my favorites, they have a crash-free coffee infused with mushrooms like lion's mane and cordyceps or an extra brain boost without the extra caffeine. The mild amount of caffeine, about half of a normal cup of coffee plus the mushrooms, gives me all-day focus. It's organic and fair trade and a staple of my morning routine. To mix it up, I sometimes also sip on their matcha packets or make a smoothie or latte with one of their blends. They have both regular ground coffee and instant packets which I always have with me when I travel or am on the go. Check out all of their products at foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and use the code `wellnessmama` to save 10% on everything.

This episode is brought to you by Joovv Red Light Therapy Devices. Fall is just around the corner, and the days are getting shorter, temperatures are going to be cooler, and we'll have less of a chance to get healthy natural sunlight but I have a trick to staying healthy and getting some of the same benefits during the winter. And that's my Joovv light. Joovv can't replace natural sunlight but it does deliver similar wavelengths of light, red and near-infrared to be specific, that have been clinically proven to be very beneficial to your health. I've had one for years and they offer a wide selection of configurations, from small handheld devices to large setups that can treat your entire body at once. It's also very important to note that the critical components used in their devices are medical-grade and have passed rigorous third-party testing to ensure they're safe and effective for home use. I've been using mine for healthy skin and to tighten up my skin after six babies and a lot of weight loss. Since we're all staring at the gloomy months ahead, I highly recommend investing in a Joovv device. Believe me, you'll feel a lot better with this light in your home this winter. And for a limited time, Joovv is offering all of my listeners an exclusive discount on their first order. To find out go to joovv.com/wellnessmama and use the code `WellnessMama` to your order.

Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie, from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com. That's wellness with an E on the end. And this podcast is all about an amazing story of overcoming cancer and also about sexual health and biohacking. I am here with Dr. Kanwal Bawa, who is a Board Certified physician and founder of Bawa Medical and Chief Medical Officer at the New Wave. She is committed to her philosophy of rejuvenation from the inside out. And in this episode, she shares her story of overcoming breast cancer and also becoming a beauty queen. And the reason that she actually did that and how she used that platform to show her scars and to show her hair loss and all the things that came along with her cancer diagnosis and to bring awareness. She also talks a lot about some taboo topics. we talk about sexual health quite a bit and some really surprising statistics on health and hormones related to both men and women, and how these change over time and with age, and also ways to help improve them. So, definitely, a fact-packed episode, her story is really incredible. And without further ado, let's join her.

Katie: Dr. Bawa, welcome, and thanks for being here.

Dr. Bawa: Thank you for having me.

Katie: I'm so excited to hear more about your story and your expertise because it seems like you have both personal and professional experience in a couple of areas that are extremely applicable to a lot of people right now. But to start broad, I have read that you have a really, really interesting and amazing story about overcoming cancer, which as we know, statistically is on the rise right now and, unfortunately, many people will receive a diagnosis of at some point in their lives. And then not only overcoming that, but turning that into something really beautiful and empowering and amazing. So can we start by learning a little more about you and your story?

Dr. Bawa: Yes. Thank you so much for that. I was misdiagnosed with my breast cancer for almost three years. I initially discovered my lump when I was still in my late 30s and my gynecologist tried to blow me off and tell me that I really didn't meet traditional risk factors, that I was still not 40, insurance wouldn't cover it. And I was a little perplexed because I thought it was about the patient, not the, you know, the numbers. So it took a lot of convincing. I did get a mammogram, but then they misread it. They got an ultrasound, but they misread that too. And this happened for several years in a row. So finally, I insisted that there was something very wrong. They thought I was neurotic, and it was okay. I didn't really care at that point. I knew something was wrong and I had to be an advocate for myself.

So at that point, I ended up going to a different hospital. I ended up going to the University of Miami Sylvester Cancer Institute, and I can honestly say that the doctors there saved my life. So if we get nothing else from our time together, I want women and even men to know that when they feel that there's something wrong with them, that they must insist and not to take it lying down, not to let anybody tell them that they're being crazy, that they're being hypochondriacs. When you know you now. And however, you know, this happened to me and while this was not something that I expected, I had a choice. I could let cancer defeat me or I could make it about something bigger than myself. So, I, of all things, decided to join a beauty pageant. Now you may wonder why at age 43, I felt the need to join a beauty pageant. It's because I found as a cancer patient that my fellow cancer patients had given up on themselves. They felt that cancer was going to defeat them. And I honestly believe that if you think it will defeat you, it absolutely will. You are right one way or the other.

So for me, I was never going to submit to cancer. It had to be about making something good come out of something terrible. And so, I decided to join Miss Florida to inspire cancer patients to live their best life in spite of cancer. To show them that joy mustn't end, and that they are no less beautiful, even if they have scars, even if they lose their hair. So, I went on stage four weeks or so after my mastectomy. I had my scar visible, I refused to cover it with makeup. It would have been easy to do so, but it was a matter of principle. I also went on stage with no extensions and no wig. I bought a wig, I just couldn't bring myself to wear it because I wanted to speak my truth. And when I won Miss Florida, it was a big win, not just for me, but for cancer patients and

those undergoing adversity of any kind. So, in so many ways, you know, my story has been found to be inspirational for that, and I'm very happy because that's what this is about.

Katie: That's amazing. And two things really stood out to me in that. The first being the importance of advocating for ourselves when it comes to medical care. And I had a similar experience in a much less ominous diagnosis, but I, for years, knew something was wrong and would go to doctors and ask for tests. And I suspected it was my thyroid. And similarly was told, "Well, you're not in a high-risk group. All of these things are normal postpartum. Your levels are fine." And they were only testing, of course, certain levels. And I had to advocate for myself for many years with multiple doctors to finally get a diagnosis that then helped me recover. And you hear about this a lot in the medical world. And unfortunately, it seems like it often happens more to women than men often because I think many studies are done on men because they are easier to study.

But I think...I'm so glad you brought that up because I think the best outcomes, and you might agree from a doctor's perspective, happen when you have a patient who is invested and well-informed and advocating for themselves, and also wanting to work with a practitioner as a partner in improving their own health. And the other thing you said that I think is so important in this and in honestly, every area of life is that mindset piece. And the idea that if you think something will defeat you, it will. And also if you have a positive mindset, that goes such a long way toward the recovery. How important do you think that mindset piece was for you and for other people in the same situation?

Dr. Bawa: I love what you said because so many doctors are not testing you fully, even if they do test you. And I'm so happy that you were an advocate for yourself and you found what was wrong. And as far as mindset is concerned, mindset in my case was everything. And this may seem dramatic, but this is a true incident. I had some complications during my cancer treatment and I was in my chemotherapy suite. My blood levels were tanking for lack of a better word to say it. And one of my nurses started to cry. She just felt terrible for me that I was taking two steps forward and five steps back it seemed every time we turned around. And when I saw tears in her eyes, I consoled her and I said to her, "It's okay. It truly is. I will be fine. And not only am I going to be fine, in just a few months, I'm going to be Miss Florida." And she laughed as she cried. And this is an honest-to-goodness story. This really happened.

And I had to explain to her that I was not going there for a participation medal, I was in it to win it because it was not worth doing if it was not worth doing fully and well. So, I hope that my story has sent a larger message to people in general about mindset, about perseverance. And I think that if I didn't have that mindset, if I didn't have that perseverance, I don't know that I would have made it as far as I did and had the outcome I did because so much of cancer is depressing. I'm not saying that there wasn't any depression on my end, there was. I chose not to dwell on it. So I think that's the main thing.

Katie: And I also love that you reframed that and didn't hide from the struggles or try to cover the scars of that and let that actually be an outward, like, witness to your struggles so that it could open a conversation about

that. I think often in society, there are such...very defined standards of what feminine beauty looks like and that pressure to feel perfect and to not have scars and to not have anything that's not considered, you know, physically perfect. And probably by doing that, you gave women freedom to be who they truly are in so many ways, and to not have to maintain this illusion of perfection. And from what I've read, also that was a large part of your reason for competing as well is that you were able to shine a spotlight on other cancer patients and on that as well, right? You used your platform to bring a lot of awareness there as well.

Dr. Bawa: Absolutely. I spoke on stage about how I was misdiagnosed. I wanted to raise awareness for cancer misdiagnosis, as well as tell cancer patients that life doesn't end with a cancer diagnosis, that there's so much stuff to look forward to. Now, going on stage and the dress I chose and with the hair and makeup I chose was a statement. I did not choose a dress that covered my chest. I could have. There are many gowns I could have worn that are perfectly beautiful that didn't show my scars, that didn't show my uneven breast size. But I went on stage as is. I was completely uneven. Things had not been finalized yet with my second surgery. I still haven't had it, but I didn't let that govern my choice of dress. This was about, again, something bigger than myself. So, I went there with my uneven cleavage, my scar visible, and short hair with some areas that were more thinning than others. And this was important to me because I don't want people to think that cancer is not beautiful. Cancer is just as beautiful as anything else. And I think that that was a very important message to send to the world. And I think it's a message that resonated. My win redefined beauty after cancer.

Katie: And I can only imagine how in the beginning overwhelming a cancer diagnosis must feel. And I hear from people, unfortunately, like I said, cancer seems to be on the rise across the board, who receive a diagnosis and, you know, overwhelmed and wonder where to even start looking for resources. So I'm curious if there were things that were helpful to you in establishing that mindset piece when you were going through that and/or that helped you know things to do to physically support yourself through that process and to make sure your body was nourished and able to recover?

Dr. Bawa: You know, it's interesting how life worked out for me. I was not really...as part of my medical practice, I founded and owned Bawa Medical in Boca Raton. It is a wellness and rejuvenation-based practice. When I started this, when I conceived this practice, I was not thinking of cancer. I was not thinking of what a cancer patient needs for support yet ironically, my life took that path. So, in my case, I was very lucky. I did not have to go outside to look for a lot of the things I needed. I could do IV therapy in my own office because I found it helpful. Also, chemotherapy is so nauseating, you can't eat well, your nutritional level goes down at a point when you need a higher nutritional level to fight that disease, to fight that chemo because chemo is doing quite a number on you, it's a poison, essentially. You need it. I highly recommend it. It saved my life, but it's a poison. Let's not forget that. So, how do you counteract that? I had IV therapy.

The other thing that happens with cancer is hair loss. I am a hair restoration specialist. So I was very lucky in that sense that I was able to do hair restoration within my practice because I feel that cancer hair loss is misunderstood. So much of it is about hair restoration where in so many cases, it should be about hair loss prevention. Nobody thinks of it that way, even my own friends said I was being ridiculous that I should accept it gracefully. They told me I was being, you know, very superficial. And I said, "It's not about being superficial.

It's about fighting it when you can fight it." When I have tools, why not use them? So I did a bunch of different things in my practice and I never went bald despite very strong chemotherapy. The chemotherapy I underwent was a combination of Taxol and Adriamycin and Cytoxan. To anybody who does cancer treatments or has gone through cancer treatments, they know how strong that chemotherapy regimen is yet I never came close to being bald. I lost the length, never the actual hair, you know, on my head. So did that.

I also did skin treatments at my own practice because chemotherapy causes a lot of skin damage and hyperpigmentation. So no matter how much sunscreen I used, I still had a lot of skin damage. So, a lot of that I found I was uniquely positioned to help myself. So this is not a plug for my practice in any way. You asked how I got through it, so much of it is because of what I do for a living anyway. Now, how other people would get through it, I highly recommend that they reach out to their oncologist, ask for the resources near them. Maybe there is a practice like me near them. Maybe there is somebody who can help them save their hair. Maybe there is someone who can help them with wellness and IVs and, you know, helping them with chemo-related skin changes and things like that. Because, you know, it's very depressing when you look in the mirror and you don't look like yourself anymore. It's not about being superficial, you almost don't recognize who you are. And there's something to be said for trying to maintain what you can of yourself through it all.

I mean, there was a point I had no eyebrows and no eyelashes. So I decided it was about mindset. I didn't want to accept that. So, I actually went out and developed a product to grow lashes and brows that's healthy, that doesn't change your eye color and do damage to the skin around your eyes. Because so much of what's out there can also do damage. People don't talk about it. Like Latisse, does it work? Absolutely. But it can cause some changes in the color of your eye, for instance. Nobody talks about that part of it. So I decided that cancer was going to be something that just was positive in every way for me. So I even went and developed a natural product that I now have in my practice for that. So, so much of that, you know, I was so lucky, but I do recommend that they reach out to social workers, they reach out to support groups, and in my case, to friends. My family doesn't live here. My family's overseas. So my friends were my tribe. They were the ones who helped me through it all. My friend, Carmen, picked me up from chemo every single time. She just took it upon herself. You know, it takes a village. I was very lucky to have a very supportive village.

Katie: That's beautiful. And I think that also illustrates what seems to be a false dichotomy that sometimes happens when it comes to cancer treatment or any kind of medical treatment. It seems like often there's a tension between the conventional model and the things you need to do medically and the wellness side. And it seems like the best outcomes actually happen when someone is able to access all of those things, that it is not an either/or, but very much a both/and. And that you can do things that are supportive of your body and also supportive of hopefully, the process of treatment and helping your body recover more quickly. But that's a really incredible story that hopefully gives hope to anyone else who might, unfortunately, be in the same situation. And you mentioned your practice, I'd love to delve into a couple of different areas here because I know you work with people in a variety of different ways.

But another area I hear a lot from women about right now and I wonder if COVID might be a contributing factor here, but is sexual wellness. And it seems like there is an increase in sexual-related problems or just

libido and sexual satisfaction, especially in women. I don't know if this is current or if you've maybe seen this for a long time. So I'm curious if you're comfortable sharing, if you had any of those struggles when you went through your chemo journey, but also the ways that you help address that in your patients.

Dr. Bawa: Yes. Now, vaginal health is something I'm very passionate about. I do a lot of intimate wellness for both men and women at my practice, and chemo and cancer treatments, cancer medications, even after chemo can cause a lot of changes in a woman's hormonal balance. It threw me into menopause. So, you know, there's a lot that goes wrong with cancer and with aging, in general. In my case, it was just amplified because of the cancer. But vaginal health is something that is very ignored. Women take better care of their cars than they do their vaginas, unfortunately. And I am here again as an advocate for good vaginal health. And like I said about hair loss when it comes to cancer, why are we reacting? Why are we not preventing? I am all about prevention instead of treatment. So, I encourage women to come get vaginal rejuvenation at a younger age. So many of my patients say, "Well, I'm not that bad yet." And I'm telling you, it makes my head spin because I want to explain to women around the world that they need to take care of themselves sooner.

If you address the problem earlier, younger, you have better results long-term. Your vagina will age differently. It's not just your face that's aging, it's your vagina as well. So I'm very big in my practice on FemiWave. It is acoustic wave therapy, literally using sound waves to bring better blood flow into your vaginal area, in general, not just your clitoris, your labia, your pelvic floor, it all needs good blood flow. So this breaks down blockages and blood vessels like plaques. You know, it's not just your heart and the arteries in your heart that have blockages as you get older, blood vessels everywhere develop blockages. So this is to promote good, healthy blood flow. And that makes your pelvic floor stronger, which is another thing that goes with age and childbirth and everything else. I'm not saying that we are curing incontinence, we are certainly making a big stride towards minimizing it with this.

So I recommend it to women of all ages. It also makes women extremely orgasmic, which is just a wonderful plus point with it. So, we do O-Shots at our practice, but we also do FemiWave because of the wonderful, wonderful effects we have with it. And there's no doubt, and that's the beauty of it. We do vaginal laser rejuvenation as well at my practice with CO2. Now I'm not by any means saying anything negative about CO2, there's a time and place for it. But I find that FemiWave is something that helps women across the board. I honestly have a problem trying to even tell you as a woman it will not work. And you know what? Often the question is, "Who will it help?" I think the question with FemiWave is different, "Who will it not help?" And I honestly can't think of anyone it wouldn't help in some shape or form. So that's something that I'm very happy to be doing. And we are now a center of excellence with both FemiWave for women and GAINSWave for men. And I feel that we're doing so much good to society, in general, by helping people this way.

Katie: So you mentioned that like that aging process happens there as well, especially just as a part of normal aging. And I know women report more pelvic floor issues, especially after childbirth, which makes complete sense because there's some intense trauma that can happen during childbirth for a lot of women. And I assume that this also affects the sexual experience quite a bit and sexual health that way. Are there other factors, like for instance, you mentioned that that kind of pulled you into menopause? I know menopause

often affects sexual health for women. Are these things that you do in your office able to help kind of address the, like, sexual satisfaction side of that even after menopause for women?

Dr. Bawa: Yes. What I do is very comprehensive. I feel the different parts of what I do are very synergistic with each other. For instance, I don't just do hormone replacement, I like to call it hormone balancing because there's an imbalance in many aspects of our life as we age, as we fight different diseases. In my case, it was cancer, but in your case it's thyroid disease. It's no less traumatic to your system. So I try to optimize health. I try to optimize wellness, in general. So I like to take my patients and see them as the bigger picture, not just one part of what I'm doing. So I would optimize your hormones. I would optimize your nutrition and your metabolic situation with IV therapy. I would do, you know, GAINSWave if you're a man, I do FemiWave if you're a woman. These are things that help everyone. I cannot imagine giving you a subset that it would not help. In some shape or form, it will help everyone. And then I fine-tune it further. Does somebody need, you know, for instance, a vaginal laser? We can always do that. Do the men need some kind of medication? We can do that. So I think that this has to be seen as a bigger picture and not bits and pieces.

Katie: I agree. It seems like the best outcomes in any realm happen when you address the body as a whole and work and support its natural processes versus countering them. In that realm, are there things that you found helpful personally or that you recommend to your patients that they can do at home that are supportive, whether it be certain nutritional practices? I know like it seems like sleep and hydration are across the board always good recommendations. I'm yet to have anyone in 500 guests on this podcast say sleep is not important and hydration doesn't matter, but are there things you encourage your patients to do to help improve the effects of these treatments and also that were helpful to you when you were going through your journey?

Dr. Bawa: Of course, mindset was the number one thing for me. I felt that anything I could do to calm my mind was helpful. I think meditation is underrated. I don't think that you have to sit for an hour and, you know, stare at the space to meditate. I think meditation can be different things to different people. The idea is to calm your mind. If that is by taking a walk, if that is by listening to a piece of music you find soothing. No matter what it is, I think you need to calm your mind and find balance within yourself above all. And then I think that hydration is a wonderful thing. As you mentioned, hydration is a basic thing. If you are not hydrated, then nothing works well. Your skin, your health, in general, nothing works well without hydration. Nutritionally, I'm not telling you you have to eat organic, it's not always feasible, but whatever you're eating, I do recommend trying your best to have a more inclusive diet, more fruits and vegetables, not taking any group out of your diet.

For instance, chemo can lead to a lot of weight gain. It's a fallacy when people think that all cancer patients lose weight. Some gain. I did. So I think the idea is to not say that, "Oh, let me do keto. I'll lose weight," or let me do this or that, I'll lose weight. I think a balanced, healthy diet with sensible portions is important. It's a boring thing to say, I know. There's nothing dramatic about what I'm saying, but that's important. Balance is important in every aspect. And then, of course, I think when you can find a doctor near you who can help you with the things that helped me. I was lucky, I happened to be doing this anyway. All I had to do was come to

work and, you know, all of this was available to me, but seek out practitioners who believe in a holistic way of life, who have in their practice something that can help you. Now, sexually, for instance, we've talked about FemiWave. If you are somewhere where you don't have a FemiWave provider, we even have a device. If they contact us, we can always ship it to them. It's an at-home intimate wellness device that uses the same concept of sound wave technology and uses sound waves to break up blockages and bring good blood flow into the vaginal area. It's not as strong as what we do in the office, but it's a wonderful adjunct for any other treatment or anything else you're doing in your life. If you can't get to us personally, at least use this at home. It is very helpful.

Katie: And I'm curious if you can speak to maybe in just generalities or maybe specific cases without using identifying details, but what kind of reasons people often need these kinds of treatments? Like, I think most people maybe don't realize that you see those kind of blockages in all tissue, not just in your heart, like people understand in that level. But it would seem like increasing blood flow would be a pretty dramatic shift. What kind of results do people typically see?

Dr. Bawa: Oh my goodness, I have a YouTube channel, Bawa Medical, and one of the videos I posted just about a week ago is about a gentleman who is almost 69. His girlfriend is four months older than him and they're having the best sex of their lives. They have both had treatments from us. The gentlemen had GAINSWave and he says that, you know, they're having sex at least once a day, if not twice a day. And sometimes they have nooners. That to me is inspirational for anybody half his age, let alone somebody who's almost 70 years old. So are we seeing results? We're absolutely seeing results. We are changing lives. What we do is transformational. At my practice, I'm giving them a new lease on life. It doesn't matter what age you are. If you have a problem, there's no point in denying it, accept it, find help, and live your best life. Do you know that 20% of men in their 20s suffer from erectile dysfunction? Nobody thinks that the 20s could bring dysfunction, but it's absolutely true. It's a known fact within the scientific community that 20% of men in their 20s have it, 30% in their 30s, 40% in their 40s. It just goes up about 10% per decade of life.

Now, like you said, we don't always have those studies in women. There is a glass ceiling for women and not just in the workforce, unfortunately. We are often blown off, we're called histrionic, hysterical, you know, hysteria, the concept of hysteria, you know, when you look back at how the term began, it's very denigrating to women. So I'm not here to say that...you know, I'm not here for a women's lib discussion, I am just here to say that ladies, we don't always have the studies for us, we don't always have the statistics for us, but now we have options and we should go utilize them. Do this for yourselves. Get some help. There's help out there.

Katie: And I know that it's been a relatively dramatic shift, those decline in hormone levels and the rise in ED, even in young men. And I know we see low testosterone, even in young men. I've even seen some statistics that men often will have a third of the testosterone their grandfathers did at the same age. And to me, that speaks to the fact that we know that we've had big environmental changes that are leading to some of these problems. Our food supply has changed. So now it becomes important to be more proactive. When we have more negative inputs that we have to deal with, we have to become more proactive in counteracting those things. And to circle back to what you said too about diet as well, and eating a balanced, healthy diet and not

coming from a place of deprivation, I think that is something that uniquely affects women more as well because of diet culture and because of some of those things we talked about early on.

And it seems like many women struggle with the mindset of being able to nourish their bodies enough and being able to eat enough varied food to really actually support our body. So I love that you brought that up because that's something I've said on here before is we have to shift that mindset again, with mindset being so important away from like food is bad. There's guilt attached to food. I need to diet and be thinner, to I love and accept my body, how can I nourish it to the best way possible? How do I support it? How do I support its natural processes of detoxification, of anti-aging? Our bodies are so incredible in what they can do, they just need a little bit more support in today's world because they're facing more than they have in the past.

Dr. Bawa: Absolutely. Now, I hope I can touch on...you said so many wonderful things. I wish I was writing because... And I'm going to go back once we record this and actually talk about this on my own social media platforms because what you said is profound. Now you brought up dropping testosterone levels. Do you know that sleep deprivation in men is causing lower fertility, lower testosterone levels? Again, that's something people don't talk about. It's not a sexy topic, but it's true. Sleep deprivation is causing that. Now you said earlier about...you said something simple, you said, I know that sleep and hydration are very simple. Yes, they're simple, but they're so profound. If you don't get enough sleep, you have lower fertility. So when you have lower fertility, that affects so many different aspects of your life, and that's just one example of what sleep deprivation does.

So then you mentioned, you know, other changes that are happening, other things that are happening with culture, where we are made to feel less than. Now, I was a size 0-2 when I was diagnosed with cancer, I'm probably a size 6 right now. And I am not being hard on myself. I am not depriving myself. Don't get me wrong, I'm not eating the entire bread basket. But if I want a slice of bread, I am eating it. I am not drinking a ton of alcohol, but if I'd like a glass of wine, I am allowing myself a glass of wine occasionally. I think we need to be kinder to ourselves as women and as men. I think society is very tough on us. I think there's this whole concept of superficial beauty. And that's why I went to Miss Florida because I was fighting that concept of traditional beauty. I went at my heaviest. I went when I was still swollen from my mastectomy. I was still, you know, dealing with fluid retention. I think the concept of beauty needs to be changed. Beauty needs to be found in whatever stage you're in. And it's not about others making you feel beautiful, that feeling needs to come from within.

I understand that society needs to be kinder to people going through struggles. I get that. And that's a given. But that strength needs to come from within us. When you look in that mirror, you need to see someone beautiful, someone strong, someone who has persevered. We have all gone through struggles in life. We are all winners in our own way. I may have gone to medical school. I may wear a long white coat. My successes are different than your successes. We are the only ones who know what a hero we are and we need to feel that. That's what I want to do, inspire people to feeling and being their best. It needs to come from within truly.

Katie: Yeah, I agree. That was an important mindset shift for me because like you, I struggled with the physical changes of thyroid disease and just of having six babies in nine years. It was a lot for my body to process. And the mindset piece, I've talked about this a little bit before on this podcast, but things didn't really start shifting physically until I addressed that mindset piece. And when I could look at the mirror and find love and acceptance for myself, it became so much easier to operate from a place of nourishing my body instead of fighting it and loving it instead of depriving it. And that made all of the difference. I think you're right, that like that beauty has to come and that appreciation and that love and acceptance and joy has to come from within. And as women, that also gives us the ability to be that for other people as well. But it can't come from a place of not having it for us to begin with. And a couple of more notes I had on my show notes I wanna make sure we touch on, I've read and heard about women suffering from something called anorgasmia, which seems to be on the rise as well. Can you explain why that is happening? And if it is on the rise, why you think it might be on the rise right now, and then how women can address that?

Dr. Bawa: There are many reasons why women are having problems orgasming. For one, I don't know that many of us realize that only 18% of women can orgasm from vaginal sex, from the penetration itself. So there are different things at play here. One, we need to make our partners aware that oral stimulation or external stimulation is more important. We need to have better vaginal health, in general. Like I said, we need to bring better blood flow into the area to wake up our nerves, to wake up our blood vessels. I think people who have anorgasmia or who have painful sex...these are two different issues. Some people are having painful sex. Some people are not having painful sex, but they're getting nowhere when they are having sex. There are many elements to this. So I think wellness as a whole is gonna contribute to it and then education that there is a problem. It's okay to have that problem. And it's okay to speak about that problem. When you address it with your doctor and you tell your doctor, "Listen, I have no sensation. I'm not getting there," then I think there are a few important elements to this.

You need to speak to a therapist. There are therapists who specialize in sexual therapy and sexual wellness, and they can help you with this. When it comes to the body itself, there are doctors like me who do FemiWave, who do hormone balancing, who will help you with the O-Shot and make you more orgasmic. So there are different tools that you need to help yourself with. Again, it's not just one thing, I wish there was just one thing, but there are a host of things you can do to help yourself. And they all contribute. I think they all work together better synergistically and any one of them by themselves. So I think there's a lot out there. We just need to get that help.

Katie: And I think having the conversation, I know like any sexual health topic is a little bit taboo and, like, I think it raises eyebrows every time I talk about it on here, but I think the conversation is also very important because we know that that is tied into overall health. And to your point, I think this is a topic that is not talked about enough, especially for women. We certainly see all the commercials for all of those issues for men. And it seems like when men have a struggle with that, it becomes a very important, imminent thing to fix. But women, I feel like often are more hesitant to talk about it or feel like something's wrong with them and feel shame around it. And to your point, I didn't realize it was that drastic of a statistic, but for many women, just penetrative sex often isn't enough, but that's something that they feel bad talking about or they feel like they're not normal because of that. And so I think opening the conversation and letting them realize that there

are options and things that can help so much, but even just starting that conversation and taking that shame and that societal perception away from it is such an important first step for women. And I'm so glad we're in a time when there are things like this available and we're starting to finally have this conversation.

Dr. Bawa: Absolutely. Now I get in trouble sometimes on my social media though. I have very dignified posts. I'm not showing anything that is explicit. I mean, my posts are not pornographic, but even Instagram and Facebook will sometimes take my posts off because I mentioned sex or something sexual. Now, I'm a medical doctor, I am not doing anything inappropriate, but there is shame even to that extent. Now let me tell you something absolutely unbelievable. I decided to take my children on a vacation and close the office for a week and my assistant went on a vacation with her family. We believe in having a life at Bawa Medical, we're allowed to go on vacation. We closed down our office and we got an answering service to answer our calls so that patients could at least make and change appointments while we were gone for just five business days.

Do you know that I got a call once I was already in another town from my answering service and they said to me, "Sorry, Dr. Bawa, we know we talked to you and we set this whole account up, but we cannot answer your calls because some people call for vaginal rejuvenation, and that's an inappropriate topic." I said, "Are you serious? Vaginal rejuvenation is inappropriate?" We're not calling a porn channel, we're not calling, you know, "Hustler" or "Playboy." These are, you know, people calling the doctor's office. Why is this taboo? And they said, "Well, it's embarrassing and it's inappropriate." I said, "What about vaginal health is inappropriate to you?" And these were women telling me this. So, I was horrified, horrified that in today's day and age, in the year 2021, my answering service decides not to take my calls because I offer vaginal rejuvenation and that is offensive to them. So there needs to be a mindset shift here.

Katie: I agree. That's kind of astounding that patients contact their actual doctor about a medical problem...like, to me that would be the same as like similar to a pregnant woman trying to call her OB and being told, "Oh, I'm sorry, we can't talk about that because your vagina is involved." Like, that's astounding to me.

Dr. Bawa: I just...you know, my head was spinning. I still remember I was getting out of a cab in Philadelphia and I said, "What part of this is inappropriate? What part of this is bad? Please explain to me." I literally asked the lady, I said, "Ma'am with all due respect, do you have a vagina? Do you ever find that you need help from a doctor for your vagina? I don't expect you to answer that question," I said to her, "but how can you deny women the opportunity to make appointments for their vaginal health?" So, I may give you a small example of the answering service, but it signifies a bigger issue. It's not okay to talk about it in most cases. Why? We are all women and men, I mean, sexual health is important. We are all in a situation where we have the right to have good, intimate wellness and to not be told that it is bad or dirty or upsetting to the average person who's listening to us. Why is it upsetting to people? What are we talking about that is inappropriate?

If it's okay to talk about cardiac health, why is it inappropriate to talk about sexual health? Why is sex a dirty word? If it wasn't for sex, you and I would not be alive today. It's not necessarily a bad thing. And why should

we be denied quality of life? A good sex life leads to a better relationship, leads to a better quality of life. If you don't dribble urine when you exercise, you aren't gonna have better cardiac health. I mean, it's a bigger issue than just about your vagina and your bladder.

That's why I say that what we do at Bawa Medical is so transformational because we transform lives. And that's why I think that this needs to stop being such a taboo topic, that Instagram needs to stop deleting my posts when I talk about it, that YouTube needs to stop sending me, you know, little emails warning me about the content I'm putting out. Why am I being called a problem child because I'm focusing on a problem that we're all facing? So, so much of this, there needs to be a shift in how we think about this. It needs to be okay to talk. And that's why I'm so happy you're talking about it.

Katie: Well, and you're so right. I think that the conversation is so important. And for women just to hear that just because those things are common, it doesn't mean they have to be normal, or certainly that they have to experience them. I've had six babies, five of them came out vaginally and I don't dribble urine when I exercise or jump on a trampoline or sneeze. That doesn't have to be a thing. I think many women assume that's just a thing that happens when you have kids, but it doesn't have to be. I think starting the conversation is the first step toward it.

This podcast episode is sponsored by Four Sigmatic. My source for superfood drinks that I've been enjoying for years. They like to say that four sigmatic basically means really good for you. And based on loving their products for a long time I have to agree. To share a little bit more about one of my favorites, they have a crash-free coffee infused with mushrooms like lion's mane and cordyceps or an extra brain boost without the extra caffeine. The mild amount of caffeine, about half of a normal cup of coffee plus the mushrooms, gives me all-day focus. It's organic and fair trade and a staple of my morning routine. To mix it up, I sometimes also sip on their matcha packets or make a smoothie or latte with one of their blends. They have both regular ground coffee and instant packets which I always have with me when I travel or am on the go. Check out all of their products at foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and use the code `wellnessmama` to save 10% on everything.

This episode is brought to you by Joovv Red Light Therapy Devices. Fall is just around the corner, and the days are getting shorter, temperatures are going to be cooler, and we'll have less of a chance to get healthy natural sunlight but I have a trick to staying healthy and getting some of the same benefits during the winter. And that's my Joovv light. Joovv can't replace natural sunlight but it does deliver similar wavelengths of light, red and near-infrared to be specific, that have been clinically proven to be very beneficial to your health. I've had one for years and they offer a wide selection of configurations, from small handheld devices to large setups that can treat your entire body at once. It's also very important to note that the critical components used in their devices are medical-grade and have passed rigorous third-party testing to ensure they're safe and effective for home use. I've been using mine for healthy skin and to tighten up my skin after six babies and a lot of weight loss. Since we're all staring at the gloomy months ahead, I highly recommend investing in a Joovv device. Believe me, you'll feel a lot better with this light in your home this winter. And for a limited time, Joovv

is offering all of my listeners an exclusive discount on their first order. To find out go to joovv.com/wellnessmama and use the code WellnessMama to your order.

And also a theme from this whole interview has been the mindset piece. And I think that's also an area where there's so much opportunity for all of us, but especially women when it comes to these topics really to be able to grow and improve because there's so much tied up in that.

And I have a note in my show notes that if you were going to give a TED Talk, it would be on why you shouldn't let adversity beat you down and that mindset piece. And I love that despite all your expertise in the medical world, that that's the thing that brings...is the most important to you. So I'd love to hear a little bit more about that because I think you're right, mindset permeates through everything and is so, so important. So, I would just love to hear a little bit of your perspective on that, having been through adversity and not letting it beat you down.

Dr. Bawa: You know, everything about who I am today has been because I decided to beat adversity. I was a victim of...and I don't talk about this usually, and I'm going to try not to choke up about it as I talk about it, but abuse, abuses and...and here I go again. Abuse is something that's a big deal. Abuse is something that goes across all educational, financial barriers. I was a victim of a lot of emotional, domestic abuse and eventually physical abuse as well. And you wouldn't think that a doctor in my situation would deal with that, but I did. I overcame that. I am now not in that situation anymore, it lasted many years. I won't go into much detail about it, but the point is it was about a mindset. Something had to change and I made a change. Cancer, something had to change, it couldn't just be about sickness. It could not just be about vomiting. It couldn't just be about losing hair. I had to make it something that helped me become a bigger person, a better person. And I had to use my cancer and my adversity to be a better doctor.

So, I've decided that no matter what happens to me in life, I am going to use anything negative that happens to me to help me grow in whatever shape or form that might be, to show my sons, who are my world, that life is not about the negativity that happens to us, it's about what we choose to do to transform it. And that's why I think that if I was to ever give a TED Talk, I hope to someday, you never know, it would be about beating adversity. Like, I mentioned about Miss Florida, it was never about a pageant. It was a much bigger thing than just a pageant. It was about redefining mindset of a cancer patient. It was about redefining the idea of beauty in cancer because cancer is not supposed to be beautiful, right? That's not how we're raised to think about it. Cancer is something that makes you less than yourself. You lose your hair, you lose your skin, you gain weight, you lose weight, but either way, you're not at your best. So we assume that that means we're not beautiful. No, you are just as beautiful if not more so because now you have overcome one more thing. So, adversity is something that helps me live a better life. It doesn't make sense, it's almost oxymoronic when you think about adversity and better life, but that's how I choose to see it. Adversity for me is an opportunity for further growth.

Katie: I fully agree having been through trauma in my past as well, I can now...I think it takes some work and emotional shifts to get there, but I can now look back and have gratitude for all the lessons that came from that and the things that it allowed me to do and like you, to help other people through that experience and through that story. Same thing with my thyroid. I never would have cared so much for health had I not been given a reason. And I'm so grateful that that shift happened. I think you're absolutely right that that mindset piece is so important and that it isn't what happens to us, it is how we choose to interpret that, respond to that, and grow from that or not because we certainly always have that choice as well. For me personally, one of the books that was helpful in that was called "The Untethered Soul," and it helped me to process some of those emotions. And that's another question I love to ask at this point in interviews is if there is a book or a number of books that have had a profound impact on your life or your journey, and if so, what they are and why?

Dr. Bawa: I think a book that always comes up in my mind when I'm asked a question about books or a book that has changed me is a book called "Outliers." Outlier is a book written by Malcolm Gladwell about achievement and failure and what defines a winner, how the winners are usually outliers on the end of that spectrum one way or another, and how many times you have to do something to succeed, to become good at it. And I think that it's so much about perseverance and about rising above the average, above the norm that I think is a book that really helps me continue my journey towards self-improvement, towards achieving high standards. I am a high achiever. No matter what I do in life, I don't accept mediocrity. Mediocrity to me is a four-letter word. "It doesn't matter what you do," my father once said to me, when I was about five years old, "if you want to be a chef, have Michelin stars after your name. If you want to be a doctor, be the very best you can be." So it's not about what you do, it's about excelling at it. You know, if you want to be somebody who does cakes for a living, be Sylvia Weinstock. There's greatness to be achieved in everything. So that's, you know, something that I think "Outliers" helped me outline in my own life.

Katie: That's beautiful. I love that. And I will, of course, put links to your practice and to some post relating to some of the topics we've talked about today for any of you guys listening, especially if you are in the Florida area and want to find Dr. Bawa and learn. Those links will be there. But any parting advice for our listeners today, whether it be on mindset or health or any of the topics we've discussed?

Dr. Bawa: I think if I could actually give two pieces of advice if you'll let me, I think I'd like to say two things. Firstly, women, please go get tested, do monthly exams. They're not just something in a textbook, they save lives. They saved mine. So be better advocates for yourselves, this is important. If there's something wrong, go find help. And if your doctor blows you off, blow the doctor off, find another doctor who will listen to you. Secondly, I would say, I believe in quality of life, be it in your sexual health, be it in what you see when you look in the mirror. If you're not happy with your hair, do something to make your hair better. There is help out there. If you're not having the best sex of your life, do something to make yourself have the best sex of your life. Whether it's balancing your hormones, whether it's doing something like FemiWave, whether it's, you know, doing something nutritionally. Whatever it is that you're not happy with, don't be complacent. So many of my patients say, "Well, I'm not that bad yet." That concept makes no sense to me. Why would you wait till that point? Why would you wait till your life in the bedroom is a complete disaster before you make it better?

Why not go do something like FemiWave, for instance, where it's got no downtime, it's not painful? Do something for yourself. If you're having issues with your hormones and you're having hot flashes, speak to your doctor about optimizing your hormones. Do that. So, I think, live your best life, whatever that means to you. In whatever shape or form you can elevate your existence, do it.

Katie: I love that. And I think that sums up a lot of what we talked about today and is a perfect place to wrap up. But I'm very grateful for your time today. I'm very grateful that you have recovered, and you're thriving, and that you're helping many other people do the same. Thank you for being here.

Dr. Bawa: Thank you so much for having me. This was wonderful.

Katie: And thanks as always to you, guys, for listening, for sharing your most valuable assets, your time and energy, and attention with us today. We're both 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.