



Episode 488: Laila Ali on Mindset From World Championship Boxing to Health and Wellness

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Katie: Hello and welcome to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com. That's wellnesse with an E on the end. And this podcast was so much fun to record because I'm here with someone I can call a personal friend, and who is also a former four-time world boxing champion, a cookbook author, a health and wellness advocate, a TV personality, and a mom, as well as much, much more. I'm here with Laila Ali, who is a world-class athlete, and now, most importantly, in her words, a mom to her two children. She's the daughter of the late, beloved, global icon, Muhammad Ali. But she herself is an undefeated, four-time boxing world champion whose record includes 24 wins and 0 losses.

She is heralded as the most successful female in the history of women's boxing, and she talks today a lot about her mindset development of that and how that transferred into so many other areas of her life. And parts of her story really surprise me, especially the age at which she started boxing and her father's opinion about it. She's also been in the sports world in various different ways and has transitioned now into the health and wellness world, having been on the TV show, "Chopped," and now running a health and wellness brand and

spice company that we talk about today. But my favorite part of this episode, we're getting to really go deep on mindset and parenting, and Laila and I have a lot in common in how we think of raising and also in our own health stories. And it was such a pleasure to chat with her, and it's a pleasure to now share this conversation with you. Laila, welcome to the podcast.

Laila: Thank you so much.

Katie: I'm so excited. We finally get to record this and chat. I've met you in person once and we had a great conversation and now we get to record it. And I will say I've talked to almost 500 people on this podcast. You are for sure the first world champion boxing mom I've ever talked to. So I would love to start there. I think everyone's story is so fascinating and so important to who they become and to the lessons they can share with the world. So I would love to hear you talk about how you decided to become a professional boxer. And were you always an athlete growing up and how did that kind of...how did your career develop?

Laila: It's a very interesting story. So I was never an athlete growing up, never participated in team sports, was never fit, none of that. Most people would assume that because my father is Muhammad Ali, that I naturally would've been an athlete and maybe I always wanna follow my father's footsteps and that's what I did. But actually, I didn't wanna box and enter the ring, become an athlete until I saw women's boxing on television for the first time. I was about 17 years old at a friend's house, one of my best friend's house with her father, we were getting ready to watch a Mike Tyson fight. And all of a sudden these two women came into the ring on the undercard event. And that was the first time actually a lot of people, millions of people saw women's boxing for the first time since they were on this undercard.

And I was blown away at that moment just seeing them walking into the ring. How did I not know that women even boxed? So when they got in there, they started brawling. Okay. They were bloody, they were like fighting like warriors. And I was like, "I wanna do that." And I remember my friends were like, "You're crazy. These women will take your head off." And a year later, because I had talked myself out of it, of course, all the reasons why I shouldn't do it, a year later, I said, "You know what? It keeps calling me. I'm gonna go to the gym." I'm gonna try it in secrecy because I wanted to see if I had it in me. If I had any talent in me if and I really wanted to do this, because I understood what a big deal this would be, the responsibility that I would have coming on my father. So I fell all the way in love with boxing and I trained for six months and I was like, "I'm doing it." You know? And then a year later, so I trained for a year and then I turned pro and started fighting.

Katie: That's incredible. I would've totally assumed that it would've been as natural to growing up as like learning to walk for you. And that's so fascinating knowing you in person and how athletic you seemed that you didn't feel like you were an athlete growing up and then that quickly within the span of a year, you trained and went pro?

Laila: Absolutely. You know, I had a lot of natural ability. I am an athletic person and I had in me what it took, you know, to become a champion. And I cultivated that because obviously, you have to do the work, but it starts with your mindset. Right? And I would just say that pretty much any of us can do anything that we want to do, but when you have it in your DNA, it even makes it that much more powerful.

Katie: And that's beautiful that even though that was such an important part of life, I'm sure for your dad, it wasn't something that was ever pushed on you. It was a journey you chose on your own and I'm sure he thought was probably cool that you guys had that in common at that point.

Laila: Actually, no, he didn't. My father tried to talk me out of boxing. I remember the first conversation that we had. First of all, he's the only one that did it. Let me just put this in context. There's nine of us and he has nine children. I'm the youngest girl. I'm the only one that ever became a boxer. So he thought he was like clear, you know, out of the woods, like, "Okay, that was my thing, no one's coming behind me. And here comes the youngest baby." Right? And it would be me because I was always the one that defied him a lot of times on a lot of different things that were, you know, pretty big, but that's a whole another story. But I remember when he came in town, he said, you know, "I hear you've been boxing."

And I said, "Yes, I have. I've been training." And again, I told you I was doing it in secrecy. I didn't go and say, "I'm gonna become a boxer." I was just telling everybody, "Oh, I'm just doing this to work out because I'm losing weight, you know, yada, yada, yada." So when he came to me, he basically said, you know, "Well, you know, what's your goal?" And I said, "Well, I wanna become a professional boxer." And he said, you know, "This is gonna be really tough. The whole world's gonna be watching you. Can you imagine the pressure that's gonna be on you?" He tried to talk me out of it. And I said, "Dad, I already thought about all that. And I've made my mind up. This is what I wanna do." And he said, "Well, what if you get knocked down? And what if you get knocked out and everyone's watching."

And I said, "Well, I'm gonna do what you did. I'm gonna get back up." And then finally, after all this trying to talk me out of it and it wasn't working, indirectly trying to talk me out of it, he finally said what was on his mind. He said, "It's not for you. It's a man's sport. It's not a woman's sport. It's too hard. And I don't want you to do it." And I said, "Well, you know, we've disagreed on things before, I respect your opinion, but this is my life and this is what I've chosen to do. And, you know, if you don't, you know, support me, I'm still gonna do it anyway." So that's how we left it. I turned pro. I had my pro debut. He was there. He was in the audience and, you know, he supported me even though he didn't like it.

And then eventually, I do wanna say he came to me when I became a world champion and we had another talk. I was like, "Oh God, what now?" And he said, "I'm sorry. I was wrong, you were right. Women can box, you can fight. And I'm proud of you." And it was amazing, we cried together. And I really remember now he's not here with us anymore. It touches my heart because, you know, he was just doing what any dad would do who didn't know... He didn't know better. He didn't know... Women's boxing was not where it is now. It was like an unheard-of sport. Like, are you crazy? What are you doing? You know, and then to think of me in the

gym with all these men because you do go to a boxing gym, it's all men, I'm sparring with men, then training boxing men. And, you know, it's just not a place you want your youngest daughter. Right? So then when he kinda saw and saw it all come together, he could do nothing but respect me because he knows how hard it is to train for a fight, and then back to what you were saying, we're the only two that have that connection. I know what it feels like to be in the ring to fight professionally, you know? So we do have that connection there, but yeah, he totally wasn't with it at all.

Katie: What a beautiful example, though, of like the journey of that and him coming around and then actually enhancing your relationship in the long term and now getting to be that cool connection you guys shared. And like you, I was not athletic at all growing up. And it's a thing I've only started experimenting with in my thirties, which is a different ball game. I can imagine it might have been a little easier to start younger. But I'm learning so many beautiful lessons in that right now in the mindset and in being able to push beyond things I thought I was capable of. And I'm curious for you in that journey, what was the most challenging aspect of it? And I'm sure like so much of it was even more mental and mindset than... I'm sure the physical training was intensely difficult, but what were some of the biggest challenges you encountered?

Laila: It's so about the mindset, you know, because I am very ambitious in general, you know, and I map things out and I make a plan. I set my heart on something, I'm like, "I wanna get there." And I'm like, "What will it take to get there?" And for me just being in the gym and dedicating myself to it and wanting to learn so quickly, but certain things just take time. It doesn't matter how much you train, you know, you have to put into hours. And so I would get down on myself when I couldn't do things the way that I wanted to do them. And I had times where I'd actually, like, break down and have tears in the gym. Nobody could see it because I'm sweating anyway, but I'd be crying like, "Oh, I can't," because I'm sparring these guys that are, you know, more experienced than me and they're whooping my ass, you know, and I'm just like, "Oh." You know, but you have to give yourself that time to grow. You can't compare yourself to others, you know, and then all of a sudden, it just clicks one day and you're like, "I got it." You know, that jab, the way I'm...you know, you're turning over a certain way, you know, all these technical things that you're learning, they just click and you don't have to think about it anymore. And that's kind of the same way with anything. When you're starting a new wellness program, you know, you're starting to eat a certain way and it just seems so, you know, like, "Okay, I gotta do... You gotta do certain things."

There's so many things to think about, but when it becomes a lifestyle, it's just a part of your day. It's not even something that you have to focus so much time and energy on to stay on track. So that's what I love about when you start to learn the power of the mind and when you can apply that to so many things, because you only can really connect with something you've experienced in some kinda way. So when there's adversity or when there's a challenge or something, you can tell yourself, "I know I'm gonna get through this. I just have to go through the motions." And that's very powerful because we all have a coach in our head and we all have this voice. Right? And it's either going to lift you up or it's gonna keep you stagnant or push you down. Right? So you wanna have that mindset, to me is that voice in your head that's going to hold you accountable. That's going to push you further. That's gonna make you be like, "It's okay, you will get through this." Just hearing that voice, you know what I mean? In yourself. Not just to have someone around you telling you, but you have to be able to do it for yourself.

Katie: I love that. I've said that before that I think that one of the most important things we can do is cultivate that voice and the things we say to ourselves and the questions we ask ourselves. Like my personal example being when I was trying to figure out how to lose weight and I was in Hashimoto's and things were hard. The questions I realized I was asking myself were like, "Why is this so hard? Why can't I lose weight?" And when you give your subconscious those questions, it gives you excuses like, "Oh, well here's the reasons you can't obviously." Whereas if you train that inner voice to be positive and be in gratitude and to ask questions, like, "Why is this so much fun?" Or, "How do I make this process so easy?" Then your brain works on those questions.

Laila: Absolutely.

Katie: And it's a slow process. Like, you said, you have to put in the work and make it a habit and integrate it. But it's so powerful when you do that, the changes that you see and I feel like they start in the mind and then you see them tangibly express in your life.

Laila: Absolutely.

Katie: I love your story because you... I feel like being a world champion boxer for most people would be a huge life accomplishment and they'd be like, "Cool, I'm done. I did that. That's awesome." And for you, I feel like you just tackle everything in life like that. Having met you in person, that's just like your personality now. So having done that and like all the pressure, you conquered it, you were a world champion, how did you figure out like, "Okay, what's next? What am I gonna do now that I'm retired at such a young age from this thing and I was the best in the world?"

Laila: Yeah. You know, athletes go through this. Right? Because a lot of times, we retire young. Right? And I make the choice to retire in boxing. Say if it's a football player or a basketball player, they just don't get picked up and they have to retire. Right? So it might not even be their choice. They might not even feel like they're done. But for me, I made the choice and I wanted to start a family. Right? I already knew I can't box forever. And I kind of got to the end of my rope in terms of my inspiration from opponents and just that business of boxing I didn't really love. So I decided I wanted to do other things, but it took me about five years of searching to figure out, what is gonna be the next thing I can do that I'm gonna be passionate about the same way that I was passionate about boxing? And I had all these opportunities. Like I went on "Dancing with the Stars." They called like right at the end of my career. And at first, I said, "No." And then I thought about it and I was like, "Wait a minute, you know, this might be a good way to reach a different audience." Because I was kind of in this box. I had spent so much time getting people to take me seriously as a boxer. Every time you saw me, I was talking about knocking somebody out, you know, even when I was doing press conferences and that's not very approachable, you know?

So I wanted to show a softer side of myself that I already knew was there that people just weren't expecting. And I went on the show, went to the finals, and got all that air-time. And I started TV hosting, but I wasn't really happy, like, this isn't something, yeah, you're making money. That's great. But what am I gonna do that's gonna inspire me. Right? And be able to create. So I realized I really am passionate about health and wellness. I'm that person, that friends call, "Can you make me a meal plan? Can you, you know, help me with fitness? Can you do X, Y, and Z?" And I'll do it for free. It's like it wasn't a money thing. Right? So I was like, "I got something here, you know?" So that's when I decided that I wanted to create Laila Ali Lifestyle, my website platform. And I told you before, I'm really inspired by you and all the information that you share with people. I'm nowhere near where you are yet. But I'm like, "What can I take from my journey to help others find that, you know, confidence in themselves, that mindset in themselves to upgrade their lifestyle?"

Because, you know, I'm not just a female boxer, I'm Muhammad Ali's daughter. And when you think about what that means, okay, you have to think about a 19-year-old girl who's starting something new that she has absolutely no experience even being an athlete. Okay. And then her father, who's the greatest boxer and one of the most famous men in the world, and her father who she respects tells her, "Don't do it. You can't do it. It's not for you to do." And to say, "You know what? I'm gonna do it anyway." What kind of person does that take? Okay. And back then, I wasn't thinking about that. But now I do, what is it in me that allowed me to even defy my father and say, "This is my life. I respect you and I love you, but I still have the confidence and the dedication and the courage to make a decision for myself. And guess what? May the chips fall where they may." That takes a tremendous amount of confidence and self-belief.

So I've really been trying to cultivate that and just how I can share that with other people to find within themselves because so many of us don't go after our dreams, don't reach our highest potential. Don't even try, because we're worried about what other people think. And we're comparing ourselves to others. I wouldn't be able to accomplish a lot of what I accomplished if I just simply...even if I just compared myself to my dad, you know, and, "Oh, I've gotta do what my dad did." You know, it's like, I don't wanna be my dad. I said that from the beginning, like, "Are you gonna box like your dad? Are you gonna call out rounds? You're gonna do rope-a-dope?" These are all things my dad was famous for. And I'm like, "No, I'm not Muhammad Ali, and guess what? I don't wanna be. I wanna be me." And it's okay to say that. You know what I mean? You know, so again, finding that, being strong in your own identity unapologetically, you know, and that's for men and women, you know, it's not...you know, women, obviously, we connect with one another, we relate to one another and we have a lot of the same challenges. Right? But this is just for humans in general. Right?

Katie: Absolutely. I love that quote, that the most important weight you ever lose is the weight of other people's expectations on you. And it seems like that's part of the becoming an adult process that happens at different ages. Like you said, figuring out "who am I" and developing the peace and the confidence in that without the weight of other people's expectations. Not that you wouldn't respect their opinion and there's wisdom... Like, I like to say there's wisdom in every experience and every person you encounter. But at the end of this, we have to go into our own wisdom to figure out, what is my own path? And now you're a mom as well. I'm curious how those lessons have crossed over into the realm of parenthood for you.

Laila: Oh, man. Parenthood, it's one of those things, right? We have a lot to figure out along the way. So I didn't have parents that were very hands-on with me growing up with my father traveling the world, my mom...you know, I had nannies. My mom wasn't the type of mom that was on top of us. You know what I mean? You know, there's just different types of parenting. And I was left to really figure out a lot on my own and fend for myself. I wrote about this in my first book, "Reach! Finding Strength, Spirit, and Personal Power." And I had a very dysfunctional childhood. I was pretty much abandoned by my mom. She got remarried and it was very dysfunctional and, you know, I got myself in a lot of trouble along the way, but, of course, I learned from that. So for me, I tend to be a very hands-on mom.

I don't have nannies. I don't have any of that. I homeschool my kids. I like to keep them very close to me. And what's most important for me in teaching my children is that I love them unconditionally no matter what it is that they decide to do in life. My main thing is, what is your character? Right? And being a good person. I encourage my children to speak up. Like, even if they don't agree with something, I'm like, "Why do you feel that way?" And they speak up and I'm like, "Okay, well, thanks for letting me know, but, you know, you're gonna have to do it anyway." I allow them to ask questions because I feel like it's a muscle that needs to be strengthened as a child. So that as you get older, when you're at work or you're in a relationship or just in general, your voice is heard, you know, and you can understand it's okay to speak up. It's okay to say what's on your mind. And I want them to expect that they're gonna be able to do that and expect that people are gonna respect them when they do that and respect their voice. Right? Even if we don't agree.

So I think that all of that, that was a backward way of answering the question that, you know, just from my experience growing up with my father, you know, when I defied, I remember his religion growing up, I was like, "I don't wanna be Muslim." I was nine years old. I remember my father saying, "You don't even know anything about it. How are you gonna make that decision?" And I just said, "I just know what's in my heart. I don't feel it in my heart." How could he argue with that because I think about what was in me that allowed me to just go for life, you know, and not be afraid and not have that fear. And I'm trying to really instill that in my children as well. And I think that that's where my main focus is in, the schooling, all that stuff will fall in place. You know, I'm not focused on the things that our society says are the most important. You know what I mean? I focus on who they are as individuals. You know, what is their character gonna be? You know, and so that they can truly be happy and free in life.

Katie: I love that so much. I know when we first chatted about this a couple of years ago, when you started saying some of these things, I was like, "Oh, I love this woman." I resonate so much with that.

Laila: Thank you.

Katie: And I think two things you said that I think are just so important as parents, the first being that your kids know that you love them unconditionally. And, like, I try to make that effort with my kids to say all the time, "I

love you unconditionally. There's nothing that can ever take away from that. And there's nothing you ever have to do to increase that or earn that," because that was the part I feel like needed to be said out loud that I knew my parents loved me, but there was an achievement condition attached to it. And so I wanted to make sure that was broken in my kids. And then also that you encourage them to question things. I think so often as parents just like, "No, this is the way it has to be done," because answering those questions takes time and effort and it can be exhausting. And I've tried to cultivate that not perfectly because my patience runs out sometimes.

Laila: Of course.

Katie: Fine. It's like, you know, I tell them, "Question everything, ask questions, ask hard questions." And my oldest at a few years old, he goes, "Even you?" And I was like, "Even and especially me. This should always be a safe place for you to be able to ask questions and a safe place for you to get answers and not have to have the same opinion as me," because like you, I want them to have that in their whole lives. I think that's a beautiful example that you're setting. And as a fellow homeschool mom, I know it's not always easy. So I commend you so much for doing that, and how old are your kiddos now?

Laila: So, Sydney is 10 and my son just turned 13.

Katie: Okay. Fun ages. That's such a good age.

Laila: Yeah. They're amazing. You know, and they're the most loving, kind, thoughtful kids. So I'm truly proud of that and, you know, like I said, it's just...we all do the best that we can, you know, and nobody is perfect. You know what I mean? And like you were beginning to say that, yeah, it does take time, and sometimes it can get irritating when you're just like...you know, they try to take advantage of it. You know, it's like, "We're not gonna be asking a bunch of questions about emptying the dishwasher. Like that's your job. Just do it." You know what I mean? But it's balancing everything, but in general, yeah. I think it really makes a big difference for them to know. I tell my daughter all the time, "I love you no matter what, just the way you are." And sometimes she'll say, "Mommy, do you love me? Do you still love me?" And I'm like, "Of course, I do." I'm like, "Do you still love me?" She's like, "Yeah." And I'm like, you know, "Sometimes when I get on your nerves or you get upset but you still love me. Right?" And she says, "Yes." And I said, "Okay, so I want you to understand the same." You know?

Katie: That's beautiful. Okay. So back to your story. So also from what I've read of your bio, you competed on "Food Network" and won a couple times. I'm curious what led to that journey and what that was like.

Laila: So once I had decided that I was all into health and wellness and cooking was a big aspect of that, I started cooking when I was about nine or 10 years old and I liked to cook with a healthy twist. So I said, "You know what? I'm also thinking in business. I wanna go into the food space. So let me start doing some food, you know, focused shows." So I got this offer to be on "Chopped" celebrity version, and I said, "Yes." And I hadn't even seen the show. And then I turned on the "Food Network" and I was like, "Oh my God, this is a tough show."

So of course being the athlete that I am, planner, I started preparing, I watched the show and saw, you know, what works for people and what doesn't. I actually did like a mock "Chopped" at home just to see what things might come up. And I went on and I won and I went in to win. I was like, "These celebrities are not gonna beat me." So I always will size up my competition. Like I'm not gonna beat probably the pro chefs and all of that. But the celebrities, I was like, "I got this." So I went in there, I won, it was super fun. Then I had to come back again, win again, which I did. And then I had to do like a... I had to finally go champions versus champions. So then I had to go against a "Chopped" judge and an "Iron" chef and a "Food Network" host. And I didn't get chopped first. I got chopped after the second round, which was amazing. It was one of the toughest things I've ever done because it's so challenging, but it was so fun, so exhilarating. And I love being able to say I'm a "Chopped" champion.

Katie: That's so cool. And then it's one of the tougher things you've ever done. Because I actually just started taking martial arts and fighting classes and when punch just come at my face, I'm still like I freak out. And so the fact that you've fielded punches and then like also fielded that and that was tougher is impressive to me.

Laila: I know. Like a lot of people train as a workout and they'll say, "Oh, I'm boxing." I'm like, "You mean just training. Right?" And they're like, "Yeah." Because getting hit is a whole another thing. You know what I mean? And it's a whole different feeling. Like it's easy to just throw punches, right? And just keep going. But as a professional, like, are you gonna keep going after somebody that's like hitting you with a body shot and hit you in your throat, you know, hit you in your nose and your eyes are watery and you can't see and all those things? So Katie, don't be doing that. Okay?

Katie: From an expert, I'll take your advice, and then that led to you also having a cookbook, which I have in my home. How did that progression happen?

Laila: Well, as I said, I've been cooking since I was so young. My grandma literally taught me how to cook a lot of my favorite meals on the phone because she's from Louisiana, but I don't really like her methods of cooking. Right? So I'm like, "How can I make this healthier?" Because as I got older, as I started training, that's when the transition came when I started training to be a fighter. And I said, "What is it gonna take to be the best?" And a lot of that had to do with nutrition, right? Energy, getting...you know, you are what you eat at the end of the day. So I started healthier cooking methods and that's what's in my cookbook. It's very soulful, tasty, comforting meals, that are prepared in a healthier way. And then there's a lot of information in there just to

help inspire people and educate them on how they can just upgrade their cabinet, their pantry, their kitchen as a whole.

Because I think that, you know, there's so much information out there as you know, and it can be so overwhelming when we think about all the things we need to take away. You know, what can we add? That's what I like to think. What can you add to what you're currently doing? I don't care if you're eating drive-through food every single day. Can you drink more water? Can you find a good supplement or vitamin to take daily? Can you maybe eat a salad? Can you get a small fry instead of a large fry? It's like let's try to take these baby steps because at least you're working in the right direction because people try to go all or nothing and then it doesn't last. And guess what that does? That makes you deep down inside, feel like I failed and I'm probably gonna fail again. You see what I'm saying? So it's like, "Let's try something different. Let's try to do something different." And I don't mean a different diet plan. I mean just our approach to it, our mindset, right? Let's go into it a little bit slower. So that's what I encourage people to do. But yeah, "Food for Life" is an excellent book for any kitchen.

Katie: I love that point you just made about the mindset and the idea of you kind of go all or nothing, and then you fail over and over. You're actually in your mind training yourself to fail. And so how do you deconstruct that and then focus on the positive and start training yourself to win?

Laila: Absolutely. I can apply it to even in sports. You know, I knew a lot of fighters in the gym that had losing records, you know, and they just started thinking... And I say records, I'm talking about losses on their record as a fighter. And then they just kind of went in expecting to lose. It was okay to lose. It was okay. Like, "Oh, I felt that." Like I'm undefeated. Okay? So I'm like, I can't imagine what life would be like losing. You see what I'm saying? Now again, we lose at certain things. Not everyone could be undefeated. I've lost at a lot of other things outside of the ring, but I'm just using that as an example to explain that mindset. Right? So it's like you have to at least feel like you gave it your all, you know, because at the end of the day, we a lot of times know why we failed because we decided to go off course. We decided to give in. We decided that we didn't wanna be strong enough. You know? So again, why not just try another way? Why not try not to put so much pressure on yourself and then you be like, "You know what? Yeah, I can get a medium fry, you know, instead of a large fry today." That's doable, you know, and then take baby steps.

Katie: And that dovetails perfectly into I'd love for you to kind of explain the broad strokes of your approach, your philosophy to food and wellness, and how you approach that. And maybe what lessons have tied in from these other areas of your life and now are involved in your Laila Ali Lifestyle brand.

Laila: A lot of it is, you know, meeting people where they're at and that's kind of what I just said, you know, meet you where you're at. What are you currently doing? What small changes can you make today and build upon them? You know, and you really have to know your why and we say that ...we've heard that over and over again. What's your why? What's your why? Because it's really important because that's gonna...you've gotta have that grounding, that foundation. Why am I doing this? Are you like, "Oh, I just wanna lose some

weight for my best friend's wedding?" Or are you like, "I wanna be here for my children. I understand that what I choose to put in my body, where I choose to put my energy and my attention, how I live my life is directly affected to how long I'm going to be here. Right?"

And of course, God willing. I mean, God's in charge, right? But I'm talking about one thing that my fear is that always gets me back on track because I do fall off track is like I don't wanna have something happen to me that I'm like, "Oh, if I would've just done better in this area, you know, bring something upon myself that I feel like I could have controlled. Right?" And again, I say this because, you know, leading killer is heart disease, you know? And then we got diabetes and obesity and these are all things that we can control. There's all these outside things going on as well, but these are things we can control. So for me, it's about meeting you where you're at, trying to figure out what your why is, and then devising a plan and not knocking yourself, beating yourself up, you know, if you fall off track, right?

And that looks like something different for everybody. You know, a lot of people say, "Well, what's your workout?" And I get it. Like, you wanna be inspired, but it's like you're not gonna hit the heavy bag for 10 rounds and then go run 4 miles and do all this. You have to do what works for you and something that you can be consistent with. Now, what I like to do, which I think everyone can do is I recommend people do...you know, anyone who asks my advice, can you do a smoothie every day? Because if you have a good quality protein, right? And then you put your fat in it, or you put your frozen organic veggies in it, or any other superfood powders, whatever you want, frozen vegetables, put it all in there, you've got that for the day. You know, now you're ahead of the game.

You have more nutrition in that one shake than some people have the whole week in some of their meals and it's not gonna weigh you down. It's gonna make you feel good. You're gonna be satiated. And then, you know, that's kind of a good place to start, right? And have that. And then you're gonna start feeling better and you're gonna wanna do more, you know? So that's just one of the examples of kind of what I feel that is a great start for people no matter what their food style is, no matter how they're, you know, how they're currently eating, anyone can incorporate that. There's all different types of protein, paleo, plant-based, you know, you can choose, but try to commit to doing something.

Katie: I love that you brought up the personalization aspect as well. Because like you, I'm sure you get asked a lot about the workouts and about the food side now. And people wanna know like, what supplements are you taking and what are you eating? And I'm like, "I can tell you, but it's not gonna be effective." If anything, take it as a rough framework to figure out what yours is gonna look like because if anything I've learned in the last almost 15 years in health and wellness is we are all so individualized and you can learn something from everybody's system and everybody's approach, but you can't apply it directly to your life. Because you have different genes, you have different lifestyle factors. You have to do the work to find out in your own life, what is sustainable? What works? What can I commit to? And I think that's what's so beautiful about your approach, is you're not giving someone a prescription of do these exact things. You're giving them a pathway to figure out what are the things I can do that are going to actually be sustainable in my own life and lead to really positive changes over time.

Laila: Absolutely. And, you know, we have to get out of this wanting everyone to give us the answers and taking the easy route, you know, because if you're gonna just do what I say to do one day, then you do what Katie says to do another day, then you're gonna do what someone else says to do another day, and you're gonna have all these supplements in your cabinet that you didn't even use. You know what I mean? So it's like we wanna do that, we wanna jump on something, but I think that the better you can be at slowing down saying, "Okay, what change can I incorporate and focus on this," give it time to see, you know, if it's gonna work for you or not and learn. And if you have too many things going on, you don't even know what worked and what didn't. You know, I've even, you know, done that before where I have multiple supplements because I also have thyroid disease. I have graves' disease. So I have my ups and downs.

Like right now, I have a hard time getting weight off. You know, I'm 15 pounds heavier than I wanna be. And I'm not eating a lot. It's just that my metabolism is shot. You know what I mean? So in order for me to lose weight, I have to do a whole lot, I mean, just to try to get weight off and I'm talking about...it's not even worth going through, you know what I mean, in terms of what it takes. So, you know, I'm also trying to figure out certain things for myself, because for me, it's not really about the weight, it's about how I look, how I feel when I look in the mirror. You know what I mean? Like if I know I have extra fat on my body, you know, it's not really the weight. It's just like, "Okay, this is unhealthy." Visceral fat or whatever the case may be. That's what I mean when I say how I look.

But again, other people can look at me and go, "Oh, but you're perfect. You look great." It's like, "But I know. You know, I know what's best for my body because I've been in this body for many years and I've tried many different things." So again, you gotta get to know your body. You have to get to know what works for you, what doesn't, and start listening to your intuition about certain things. You know, like some people say, "Oh, don't eat meat, you know, it's not good for you." I eat grass-fed high-quality meat. You know, I do believe in reducing the amount of meat that you eat. I stay away from commercial meat as much as I can. You know, when you eat out, you're gonna be eating it, but I'm saying, "But I know what makes me feel good and what's good for my body." It doesn't mean it's good for your body. You see what I'm saying? Being vegan doesn't work for everybody. And it is like we have to stop fighting one another, I think, and say, "Oh, okay, that's what works for you? Great. This is what works for me." And maybe share with one another, you know what I mean? It's not that complicated.

Katie: Exactly. And probably if we boil it down, we agree on so many things. Even between the different paleo and vegan and all the different camps, there's still so much that's in common about eating real food. And to your point also, there's a time and a place for recovery and for healing and being gentle with yourself. And I think often when we get wrapped up in the health and wellness world too much, we get tempted to keep doing more and more and more and more things. And especially when you're talking about hormones, sometimes you have to take a break and let your body heal. And I think if you're gonna put time and attention into something like we talked about earlier, the effort you put into your mindset, in your inner voice is gonna pay off so much, even especially during those periods of recovery. And I think like of all the commonalities, almost 500 episodes into this podcast, I'm yet to have anyone say, you know, sleep isn't important. So like

focus on your sleep. That's a huge factor of hormones and also focus on your mindset. Like I've never heard any health expert ever say, "Those two things don't matter. You can just like get through those."

Laila: Absolutely. That is for sure. And sleep is the most underrated. Rest is the most underrated. We're living in a world of work, work, work, you know, grind, grind, grind. It's like, "Okay, no, that's not the way it's supposed to be." You know, and that's why a lot of us are sick now. And that's when our bodies heal ourselves when we're sleeping. Right? And you've never also never heard anyone say that eating whole foods isn't good for you, right? Regardless of what those are, staying away from this processed stuff that's made in a factory that's not even food, that's food like, you know? And I get it. Every once in a while, you are gonna have snacks, you're gonna have certain things. I do too. I pick cleaner brands, but it's what are you doing most of the time? What are you doing 75% of the time or 80% of the time is what matters?

Katie: Absolutely. And I know one of your newer projects that makes that a lot easier, they're in my kitchen. You've developed a whole line of spice blends. I'm curious, what was the impetus for those and how you developed them?

Laila: Oh my God. Laila Ali spice blends, those are my babies. So I mentioned that I've been cooking for a long time and one thing that I'm really good at, the reason why I feel like I won on "Chopped" is because I season food really well. The flavor is there. Right? And that's what a lot of people don't do well. Right? You could see something that looks like a beautiful meal and you taste it, it doesn't always taste that great. So I like to make it easy for people to put wonderful flavors together without having to measure, without having to think about it too much, without having a million different, you know, herbs and spices in your cabinet and they're organic, they're non-GMO. They don't have a bunch of fillers like a lot of the over-counter spices that you find at your regular stores. They're just filled with things that you shouldn't be putting in your body. And you think about spices, you're sprinkling on your food every day. A little bit of poison every day is not good for you, right?

So of course, if I created something, I was gonna make sure it's healthy for you. Right? You're adding nutrition. But the main thing is really creating amazing flavors on everyday meals and just making it easy there. So the spice blends are perfectly balanced. My first original three, Sassy, Soulful, and Spicy. So Spicy is your pepper blend. It has four different types of pepper plus herbs and spices. And then Soulful is your salt. It's a seasoning salt. It's about 70% salt. So it has herbs and spices and sea salt. And then Sassy is your salt-free herb blend. So the idea is to mix and match these. Like these are the only three spices that you need. Of course, you're welcome to have other ones, but you can create with those three by replacing your regular salt, pepper, and the herb blend.

Then I also am gonna continue creating more. So I have my Garlic Goddess, which is amazing. It's salt-free. I have my Perfect Taco which is low salt, it is for more than tacos. It's just for any Mexican-inspired dish and then the G.O.A.T, the Greatest Of All Time blend, which I dedicated to my father because he used to take us to a burger stand when we were a kid that was so good. And what I remember, it was like a hole in the wall, but

their meat was flavored so well and the burger had so much flavor. So I tried to capture the flavor of not only his burgers, but the soulful meals that he loved. My father loved good home-cooked meals, you know, baked chicken and mashed potatoes and gravy and green beans and, you know, all that stuff.

So this blend is really good. I love it on beef. I love it on turkey, you know, on anything but the G.O.A.T actually, I just kind of created that one just from thin air because most...you know, you've seen garlic blends, you've seen, you know, sea salt. Everybody kinda has some of the same ingredients, but different amounts of them. But the G.O.A.T I created just on my own and just kind of was like, "How can I, you know, capture this flavor and this essence and this energy of my dad?" And I was kind of nervous about it, you know, because I was like, "There isn't any other blend like it and I totally made it up and it's one of my best sellers." So I'm really excited about that. Yeah. So I'm constantly creating more spice blends and because I actually create them myself in my kitchen and then of course have them done up in big batches, I feel so connected to that more so than some of my other products. Like I have a skincare product, I have a nutrition product, but I have other companies that are excellent in what they do, they help create those brands for me. But the spice blends are all me. So yeah, those are my babies. So I'm glad you like them.

Katie: I love them and I love when they can tie into childhood memories too. It's like, you know, we can look at the data and the studies about how important it is to eat at home and to cook at home and to eat as a family and the time and how like food is actually chemically different when we spend time making it together with people we love. Like it's really fascinating when you start delving into that world. And I love that you make it easy to do that by you save a whole step, but it's still coming from that place of homemade love from your family and gets to like tie in with these stories. So I feel like it's like having a piece of you in my kitchen.

Laila: Thank you. I put so much love and energy into these spices and you talk about energy and food and it's true. I mean, that's why you really gotta know who's preparing your meal. And that's why one of the reasons I pray over all my food, you know, especially when I'm out, because it's just like you don't know what that person was back there thinking, what they were going through for the day, you know, and they're putting that energy into your food and then you're eating it. So that's one of the reasons why I believe we pray for our food. We pray, you know, for a lot of things, but yeah, I put a lot of love into meals and it's so fun. And I tell you, it puts a big smile on my face to see my daughter, you know, sprinkling my spices onto her meals and them saying, you know, "Can you pass me this one?" Everyone has their favorites. And so many people love them. So thank you. Thank you so much.

Katie: Oh, I love it. And a friend of mine who is like well versed in quantum physics and multiple advanced degrees was at my house one time and somebody else who was there was like, "Man, why does food always taste so much better, you know, here?" And he's like super sciencey background and he goes, "It's actually because if it's made with love, it actually changes the food."

Laila: Yeah. I believe it. Absolutely.

Katie: So I love that you're helping families all over the country change their food and it comes from a place of love.

This episode is brought to you by Hiya Children's Vitamins. Did you know that typical children's vitamins are basically candy in disguise, filled with two teaspoons of sugar, a lot of unhealthy chemicals, and some gummy junk that growing kids should never eat? Hiya is made with zero sugar, and zero gummy junk. Yet it tastes great and is perfect for picky eaters. Hiya fills the most common gaps in modern children's diets to provide the full-body nourishment that kids need, with a yummy taste that they will love. It's manufactured in the U.S.A. with globally sourced ingredients, each selected for optimal bioavailability and absorption. Hiya arrives straight to your door on the pediatrician recommended schedule. Your first month comes with a reusable glass bottle, so your kids can personalize it with stickers and then, every month, you just transfer. There are no plastic refill pouch of fresh vitamins, which means Hiya isn't just good for your kids, it's also great for the environment. Learn more by going to hiyahealth.com/wellnessmama, and use the code, wellnessmama to save 50% on your first order.

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Also, I feel like you are uniquely qualified to answer this next question because a question I get a lot, I'm guessing you do as well, is how do you balance it all? How do you as a working mom and like homeschooling mom and you mentioned like you made the choice, very conscious choice to homeschool, realizing it takes extra time and effort and it's not easier. So I love to get your answer to that question of how do you balance it all and keep your stress in check?

Laila: Girl, look, that's that girl. It's a constant challenge as you know, and I just want everyone to know it is for all of us. Okay? You know, everybody has their challenges. Some of us definitely have a better system in place and I am just not the most organized person naturally to put it like that. Like I'm a little all over the place in terms of like...because my memory isn't that great just from boxing sometimes. Like if I think, "Oh, I got to text this person," I'll stop and do it right then, but I could be in the middle of doing something else that I knew I had to do. And then how many things can you have going, as systems, you have going all at one time? So I just

wanna say it's truly a challenge for me. But the things that are most important to me are what take priority, right? So it's like I always have my kids come first. You know what I mean? If they come down, they're like, "Mom, I'm hungry, I need something," I'm taking care of them first. Then I have my business, you know, things that I have to do on a regular basis, you know, and then I make sure that I take care of time for me somewhere in between a lot of times, you know, because I would love to say it used to be I could just do it all in the morning. Like, I'd be like, "Oh, I'm gonna get my workout in, the kids go to school." But now they're home. They're here all day. So I just make sure now, I'm like, as long as I get in my time, and when I say my time, like today, I worked out, I got in my sauna.

If I, for some reason, didn't get it done this morning, I would do it tonight this evening, you know, but I'm going to do it. And if I miss a day, you know, okay, that's fine, but I don't wanna miss three days. You know what I mean? Because then you end up missing a week and two weeks, you know? So I think that just having a list of priorities is really important and learning to say no. I think that we as women have a really hard time saying no because we wanna help everybody. We wanna be there for everybody. And, you know, I used to do it all the time where someone would say, "Oh, can you come to my event, my charity event or whatever event, you know it is four months from now." I'd be like, "Sure."

I don't even really wanna go. I'm just going because they asked me to go, and then the time comes, and now I can't go to my daughter's game because I said yes to something that I didn't really wanna go to anyway. So it's like, yes, sometimes we have to do favors for people. I get it. But you don't want to have too much of that on your schedule. You're like, "Ah, ah," where it starts being like you can't even take time for you. You can't even be there for your family. You can't even, you know, get on top of the projects that you've been wanting to do because your time is elsewhere because there'll always be someone asking for something. And guess what? They have a whole list of about 50 people they need to ask. I'm talking about in my world. And it's like you say yes, you say, yes. You say, no, you say no. They're just gonna keep doing down the list. They'll be okay if you say no, you're just not gonna be there. You know what I mean? So I had to tell myself that, you know because otherwise, you'd be spread so thin that you will always be trying to play catch up. And that's where I had to say, okay, I had to learn to say no because when you say no, you're able to say yes to more that's really important to you, you know?

Katie: I've heard it said, you know, everybody talks about willpower, but we should also talk about won't power. Because sometimes it's harder to say no than to say yes, but protecting that energy, especially when you're talking about your family and/or your own space to recharge and mental health as a mom, like, the whole family feeds off of our energy. So if we're depleted and constantly just open loops, chasing all those things, our kids are gonna feel that it's gonna ripple through the whole house. And so I think that's probably some of the most valuable advice you can give is just check in with yourself. And like you already said, trust your own intuition, know what you need, your limits, and that's gonna ripple over positively into everywhere else.

I also am curious because you manage so many things and seem to do it effortlessly. Like I say, as well, of course, people see our best sides publicly. And I have days where my house is a disaster or there's laundry or

the kids are all melting down, that happens to all of us. But what are the things that you, from an 80/20 perspective, the things that are the most important that you make sure are consistent in your life, that 20% that gives you 80% of the positive benefit that you always focus on?

Laila: You know, I really think it's important for me and my husband to connect with one another, you know, because we both have a lot of responsibilities, especially me, more so than him. So I have to be the one a lot of times and make sure I'm taking time for my relationship and not just putting him last because you know, the dad feels like, "Man, I come behind the kids, the pets, your work, everything," you know, especially when you are, you know, a woman such as ourselves that have all these different opportunities. And, I need to make sure that we connect because he's who I started all this with. He's who I have my children with. How he feels, you know, is really important. And I need to be his girlfriend, you know, sometimes, you know what I mean?

I need to not be mom. And sometimes it's hard to switch that gear. Right? So we have our date nights. That's really important to me because again, that's connecting with the essence of who I am, my femininity, all of that. So that's important to me. I already talked about family, being here for my kids. I put that first. I prepare dinner for my family about five nights a week. On the weekends though, I think it's important for us to have that time to say, "What do you guys wanna eat? Anything you want." You know, and so they don't feel so restricted and want things more. So literally when I say anything, if they're like, "We wanna go to Chick-fil-A or order pizza or whatever it is, I let them have it that one time and we don't give it that much energy."

Like, "No, you just can't have it." You know what I mean? It's like this is what happens when you stay consistent throughout the week, you do what you're supposed to do. Now you can go have something and it's gonna be okay. You know what I'm saying? So those are the things, just my faith. So I've already talked about family. Faith is so important, you know, really staying connected to the bigger picture of things that we're all here for a reason, tapping into that because I'm not... We all need to support our family. We all need to make money, right? Because then you can, when you don't have to worry about your bills, you don't have to worry about, you know, your kids or your medical, whatever that is, then you can be open and give back to certain causes and things that you're passionate about and you can create, you know, so I stay connected to why I'm doing what I do. What my inspiration is behind my business, making sure that I only work with people and brands that align with my values. Right? So just really staying true to all of that. You know, I do that through meditation. I do that through the just quiet time, you know, it could be listening to a podcast, you know, or whatever the case is of just staying connected to my spirituality, staying connected to my family and making sure that, you know, I have my long-term goal and feeling like I'm still moving in that direction.

Katie: That's beautiful. And one of the questions I love to ask in the pre-interview prep is if you were gonna give a Ted Talk, what would it be about? And I love your answer. In my show notes, it says finding the confidence to become the best version of you. And I think so many women, especially young girls in today's world, can struggle with that confidence piece. So I'm curious like just give us some of the highlights of ways that you would help nurture that and how you do that with your kids as well.

Laila: Absolutely. And it's crazy because God knows how to challenge you. My daughter is naturally not confident and I would've just thought I was gonna have this daughter that was gonna be like me, you know, because luckily, I was born with confidence, you know? So it's a challenge for me sometimes to try to explain to someone how to be confident. Right? And what I usually do, and I do a lot of speaking now is...and that's why when I was asked that question, I said, "Oh, I will speak about that." But I always have to tell my story, right? Because I'm not an authority. I'm not, you know, someone who went to school to teach someone how to be confident. I can only tell you what I did and what worked for me. And then maybe help you pull those jewels out in your own life and apply to your own life.

So I think that what people need to understand about confidence is it's not about not being afraid. It's not about not having, you know, fear sometimes. It's about doing it anyway. Right? It's like, okay, assessing like, "Okay, I'm feeling a little nervous right now, I'm nervous about this new venture or whatever the case may be. But guess what, how am I gonna combat that fear? I'm gonna do my research. I'm gonna be the best that I can be by practicing, by connecting with others who may have already done this and getting information from them." Putting in the work is what gives me confidence. My confidence comes from preparation. So I wanna make that clear and that's what I always say. Confidence comes from preparation. It's not just a matter of, "Oh, I can beat you. I'm gonna knock you out."

No, I'm saying I'm gonna knock you out because I studied you. I see what your downfalls are. I went in the gym. I prepared myself. I got my rest. I ate what I did. I took the right supplements. I trained. I prepared myself with the best trainers. I ran up all those mountains. And now I'm coming in you with this conviction. You see what I'm saying? So that's what that is. So it's the same thing you can apply to life, right? It's like, "No, I'm confident in this new position that I'm going for because I put in the work, you know, over the years. I did the research. I got my education. I'm a great leader. Right? And I can see the future of this company, you know, and it's a positive outlook. And I'm going to add something because you know you did the work that it took. You see what I'm saying?

So for me, confidence comes from preparation and it comes from really having this voice in your head like I said, and you have to...when you catch yourself having negative talk, you have to realize that that's what's happening and you have to...you say something negative once, you gotta say three positive things, okay, until you can train your mind to see and feel differently. That's just what you have to do. It's not like this is gonna happen overnight. But you have to at least understand what needs to be done. You at least have to have the playbook so you can start studying the plays. Right? So that's just a little bit of it. But, you know, people just need to understand. It sounds so simple for someone who is not confident, for someone who does not believe in themselves, for someone who just, "I always fail. I always fail." And trust me, I have my own daughter who is just like, "No, I'm not pretty." And I'm like, "You're so pretty." "No, I'm not." It became a habit to now she's just saying it just to say it. And I was like, "I need you to instead of saying no, I'm not, you need to say thank you." I said, "Even if you don't agree with what I'm saying, stop saying, no, I'm not, no, I'm not, no, I'm not." I was like just because you don't think you're pretty doesn't mean that you're not, you know what I mean? And then I have other ways too, but that's one thing I have to stop her from that negative response. You see? And that makes a big difference as well.

Katie: Yeah. And paying attention, especially to anything we put after the words "I am" because it, like, programs us in our subconscious. So if you say like, "Oh, I'm not good at this," you become that. And so instead, shifting that. I love that three positives to one negative advice. That's awesome.

Laila: Yeah. You're now gonna be... Yeah. If you say I'm not good at this, you think you're all of a sudden gonna be good at it? No, you're not. You're holding yourself back from becoming good at it. So like you said, like I said, but it's a habit. It's like it's a habit that we've had. And a lot of people have been doing it for so many years. So just start recognizing that and start changing it, you know? And then there's other levels. That's just something basic. Of course, you need to go... There's a book or a podcast or something, a movie, whatever it is to help you, a self-help in that area of confidence, then that's what you need to really be dedicating yourself and surrounding yourself with that energy so that you can begin to see those changes.

Katie: I love it. Well, as I expected, our time has flown by because you're so fun to talk to. But the question I love to ask at the end of interviews is if there is a book or a number of books beside your own that have had a dramatic influence on your life and if so, what they are and why?

Laila: Oh yes. One of the books just because of what we've been talking about that really made a difference in my life is...and it's not a big book. It's out there, but most of the people listening probably have never heard of it, it's called "Body Intelligence" and it's by Dr. Romeo Brooks Ph.D. And I met him a while back. He's a nutritionist in California, is a small business. And he wrote this book that is such an easy read for the layperson to really understand how our bodies work and how we have the power, right, to totally transform our bodies. You know, no matter what you're doing now, you know, you could just make this change. And his whole thing is that the body is always working on our behalf. It's so intelligent, right? So it's the most intricate, intelligent machine ever created.

We don't have to think about breathing. We don't have to think about blinking, you know, all these basic things. And it's always trying to fight against the things that we do to it, right? So it's like, you know, you don't get enough calcium. It's gonna take a little bit from here. You don't get enough vitamin A, it's gonna take a little bit from here. You're trying to protect your most vital organs at all times. So again, when I read that book, it just really gave me this visual of my body and really inspired me to treat my body even more so like a temple and understand that, you know, a lot of people don't wanna take that responsibility sometimes. I know your audience is different, you know, but in general, people don't wanna take the responsibility. They wanna just take a pill or they wanna just blame somebody else because now they feel like it's all on them. You know what I mean? When they think, "No, your health is your wealth, you're in control of your health." Right? You see I have a shirt on right now that says you heal you, you know, but everyone doesn't want that responsibility. So that book was just a great book for, just like I said, the beginner to really understand how our body works, how the food that we eat makes such a difference in our lives. And it changed my life for sure.

Katie: I love it. I'll make sure that's linked in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm, along with your website and all of your brands that we've mentioned. And I know you have a special page set up for everybody listening for the spices. So I'll make sure that's included there as well. You guys check them out, they're delicious and pretty much the only spices in my kitchen these days. I hope we can do round two one day. You're such a joy to chat with. I'm glad we got to finally connect here in person on this podcast and thank you for your time today.

Laila: Thank you so much. And Katie, you know that you have been such an inspiration to me just being the mom that you are, the person that you are and, you know, people look at us as superwomen. You know what I mean? But like I've said before, we're all in this together and, you know, the more we can share with one another and help empower each other, the better. So I absolutely would love to come on anytime. So thank you so much.

Katie: I love it. And thanks to all of you guys for listening and sharing your most valuable resources, your time, your energy, and your attention with both of us today. We're so grateful that you did. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama Podcast."

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