



Episode 494: Emily Blain on What's Wrong With
Your Personal Care Products and Creating
Sustainable and Ethical Ones

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. And today, we'll especially be talking about wellnesse.com, that's wellness with an E on the end, which is my line of natural personal care products, including oral care and hair care, and, in this podcast, some of the future products that are just now being announced.

I'm here with Emily Blain, who is our COO at Wellnesse, and who has expertise in developing products and getting them to production. And she has been instrumental in scaling these handmade recipes that I have been making for over a decade into large-scale production that we can get into your home. She has four children. So lots of children involved in the Wellnesse team. And besides having a master's degree in

education, she has this great expertise in product development. She's also an ultra runner, which is unfathomable to me. And she grew up on a farm in Kentucky working tobacco, hay, and in an orchard.

And she really delves today into our sourcing, how we get products and ingredients from...or our ingredients for our products from all over the world, why some of our ingredients are not certified organic, but why we actually chose better options than what was available as certified organic, all of our third-party certifications, and what to look for, not just in our products, but in any consumer products that you're bringing into your home. And then we go deep on topics like oral care, hair care, and how to choose products that work with your body, not against it, with the idea that what goes on our skin goes into our body, and how to not just avoid the bad stuff, but choose good stuff that nourishes your scalp or your mouth from the outside in as well. And we also go deep on packaging because you guys have heard me talk about plastic and the problems with plastic before. And so we go deep on why we spend literally 20 times more to get environmentally friendly sugarcane bioplastic instead of regular plastic, and so much more. Fascinating episode that is a deep dive and a glimpse inside Wellnesse, and really of all natural products and what to look for when you're considering bringing products into your home. I'm personally very grateful for Emily. And I think you're really gonna enjoy this episode. So let's jump in. Emily, welcome.

Emily: Thank you, Katie.

Katie: Thanks for being here. I think this is gonna be a really fun conversation to get to delve into the world of natural personal care products, and specifically with Wellnesse, because I talk about them on the podcast a lot, but I've never really deep-dived into everything that goes into that. And I know until I jumped into this world, I would buy things at the store and have no idea the process it took to get those things there, and that process is even more so when you're talking about natural products and very, very specific sourcing. So for those people who aren't familiar with you, you are the COO of Wellnesse, which is our personal care brand. You keep us all on track and without you I would be entirely lost. So I'm excited to have your expertise here today. Before we jump into that world though, like, I always love to just talk about random facts about people, and I know from knowing you that you are an ultra runner, which seems incomprehensible to me, but I have in my notes that you ran 50 miles like at one time. You did this in, like, a span of time without sleeping in between?

Emily: Yes, I did it all in one day in about 11 hours. And it's trail running, so it's out in the woods. And I find that the further you run, you just kind of get into this zone and I find total peace after so many hours out there by myself. And so that's the draw for me. If the run is too short, I can't reach that point. So, yeah, that's my longest distance to date is 50 miles.

Katie: That's amazing. I'm impressed, because for me, like, my favorite distance to run is like 100 meters, so I'm impressed that you went so far. And for a lot of the moms listening, you're also a mom of four. So you do this. Now you have a one-year-old baby and you're still accomplishing that which is just incredible to me. So major kudos to you.

Emily: Thank you.

Katie: Well, there's so many directions I wanna go when talking about Wellnesse, and I think a lot of the people listening are familiar with Wellnesse or have bought our products before. But like I said, I've never really explained everything that goes into actually making those products. And in some ways, you know this world even better than I do at this point because you're on the ground, on the phone with all these ingredients that we're sourcing from all these different places. And I know we've had an uphill battle with all the delays and just things that are happening right now in the world and you've managed all of that. So I think to start broad, let's talk a little bit about product development and kind of all the steps that go into that, because these are products that I've had DIY versions on my site for years, and now, these are available publicly, and that has not been an easy process to get something from a glass mason jar in my kitchen to a squeezable tube of toothpaste, for instance. So for people who aren't familiar, talk a little bit about the product development world and all the steps that go into that.

Emily: Sure, yes. So product development is my favorite part of e-commerce because it's that physical product, so you can actually see and hold your work, all of that work that takes months and months. And so basically, it's multiple steps. We did start out with your recipes that you made in the kitchen and we have to take those to scale. We source our ingredients globally from all over the world. So that being said, if we know we want green tea in our toothpaste, we don't just, you know, find the first green tea and go with it. Each of our ingredients are very carefully sourced and vetted to make sure that they meet all of the standards that you have set for yourself, your family, and your viewers. So sourcing individual ingredients, and then we have to find a manufacturer who can help us to take that large scale. So you've made it in a small batch in your kitchen and we have to make very, very large batches. We have to go through stability testing, of course. All of these products have to have a shelf-life. So we have to know that it's not gonna, you know, end up rancid or separate or do anything like that. Stability testing can be anywhere from 6 to 8 to 12 weeks. If it doesn't go well, we go all the way back to the beginning, back to the drawing board and try to figure that out.

Outside of that, we have to find packaging. It has to be packaging that is sustainable, that agrees with our message, and then we have to source that. And of course, as you mentioned, sourcing has been a real problem for a lot of manufacturers, just the nature of our world right now. And sourcing is probably our biggest challenge and the biggest bottleneck, and that hurts our time frame for sure. And yeah, after that, it's just putting all of those pieces together, getting all of the components to the manufacturer, and finally having that finished product in hand.

Katie: Yeah, and you make it seem easy, but it does take months usually if not more to go from... And I know I had like hundreds of iterations in my kitchen and then handed it off to you and then it all had to happen in a lab. And to stick with those criteria, like you mentioned, I know I didn't make that an easy task with, like, kind of obscure ingredients and having to vet things from different countries, like you said, and all this sourcing.

When it comes to the sourcing, one thing I wanna make sure we talk about is...because I talk a lot on the blog about eating organic and avoiding pesticides whenever possible. And not every single ingredient in our formula is certified organic and our formulas right now are not certified organic. And I think it's important to explain to people why and kind of what goes into this process, because I've realized we've kind of in a lot of ways gone beyond organic. The fact that it's not certified organic doesn't mean that we're not being very careful about vetting and sourcing those products, but... I know you can speak to this on the product world. But there are some ingredients that by their nature can't be certified organic, for instance, or ones that we can, for instance, verify that they were grown in a certain way, or make sure they don't have chemicals in them but they might not carry an organic certification. So can you just talk about that maybe in relation to some of our ingredients and what that process looks like?

Emily: Sure, yeah. So a lot of the ingredients that we source are wild-harvested. And what that means is in many parts of the world, they can go out and harvest certain things such as elderberries, and they are just wild-harvested in nature. And a lot of times, if the ingredients are certified organic and they're grown on a farm in particular countries, you don't know the labor conditions for people there. And so wild-harvested is actually a safer bet because if you're working directly with the manufacturer or that source, you know the conditions of the labor. So not everything is certified organic for that reason. And we do source globally. So some things can be grown organically in the U.S. but not in other places, but we like that source better. It's gonna be a purer source and that plant grows more naturally there.

Katie: Yeah, that makes sense. I think that was really important. I wanted to make sure we really explain that, just because... Like making sure things... Like, you mentioned the important conditions that they're raised in a sustainable way, that they're not gonna be sprayed with chemicals, but also that the labor is sustainable. And I know we've been very careful about sourcing that and verifying with every ingredient. And in fact, that kind of segues into another thing, which is we have several certifications to make sure that every level of that process has been vetted and that we are being both environmentally friendly, non-toxic to our consumers, and using safe labor and make sure that everyone everywhere along the line is treated ethically, which does make things more expensive. But can you kind of talk a little bit about our certifications from B Corp to EWG and Leaping Bunny and why we went through that process with each of them?

Emily: Absolutely. So that is a labor of love for sure. A lot of people...we go out and we shop and we don't have time to look at every ingredient on the back of the package to make sure that it's safe for us and for our families to use or consume. And so, we like to lean on these different certifications that agree with our principles and values. So EWG, which is the Environmental Working Group, their big thing is they are really good at fighting outdated legislation. And so they set standards for really healthy agricultural practices. That's probably their number one goal, making sure that the way that different ingredients are produced is safe for the environment and also acceptable for consumers as well.

So we are EWG-certified, and, as you mentioned, we also have our Leaping Bunny certification, which is cruelty-free. We do not test on animals, so that means our individual ingredients are not tested on animals and our finished products are not tested on animals. And then finally, we are B-Corp-certified, which is

probably one of my favorite. It has a lot to do with public transparency and making sure that everything, our entire business, the way that it impacts workers and consumers and community and the environment, is all just aligned and very transparent. And so just very environmentally conscious. That's our focus from start to finish. And to have all three of those certifications for our products is huge. That's a lot of work and it just speaks volumes about our products.

And one more thing I wanna mention. We are looking at creating a bar of soap, a body bar, and we are using a palm oil. And a lot of people hear that and they just cringe, because we've heard that using palm oil leads to deforestation of the rainforest. We're actually working with a sustainable palm oil farm, and the reason that we chose that route we love palm oil and the way that it can be used. And now, because coconut oil is so wildly popular, we're finding that the way that it is sourced is actually unethical. In many parts of the world they're using different monkeys to source coconut oil. And so now by using this sustainable palm oil farm, we know the conditions that the workers have and it makes us feel better, so we can safely use palm oil in our products now, which is pretty amazing to have that kind of detail. That kind of granular detail on our ingredients is really awesome.

Katie: I'm so glad you brought that up, too, because it's wonderful that we have awareness, like you mentioned, about deforestation that happens with certain types of the way that palm oil is sourced. But now, like you said, especially with third-party verification of all of this, we're able to make sure that none of our ingredients are violating any of those things and to sustainably and ethically source them, which I know we look at those criteria for every single ingredient. And the great thing about these certifications...I mean, we're super grateful to have them and I think they're awesome, but these don't just apply to Wellnessee. That was another thing I wanted to make sure we brought up is, as a consumer, any product you buy, you can look for these certifications.

And I know from having gone through literally hundreds of hours of the verification for the B Corp, that was probably the most intense certification I've ever seen. They wanted to see documentation on every ingredient, on our sourcing, on our final products, on our employees and how our employees are treated, and do we all do community service in our free time and do we care about our local communities. I mean, they went with a fine-tooth comb through so many layers, which is awesome. And so now, having gone through that, I'm even more respectful when I see other companies that have those certifications because I know just how much... And like, truly you have to get verification or documentation of everything. So that I feel like those certifications carry a lot of weight.

And with EWG as well...a lot of listeners might be familiar with them for their Skin Deep database, which I will put in the show notes for you guys. You can put products in there. You can also put ingredients in there. And so when we're formulating, we're looking at all the individual ingredients to make sure they have basically a green rating in EWG, which means there's not any documented causes of human harm from those ingredients. Because I didn't realize for many years until I started researching this, there are so many ingredients in personal care products that are not tested or proven to be safe in humans, even products that are used on babies, upwards of 100,000 chemicals now, many of which are not tested for safety.

And we know that even newborn babies, when we test cord blood, they have hundreds of chemicals now in their cord blood the day they're born. And the placenta blocks so many chemicals that probably are in the mom's body. And so we know that there's this widespread use of all these chemicals, that they're building up in the body. And so EWG for us and for any company, or for any product you're buying, is a way to look through and see if it has any potential harm for yourself, for your kids, for your family.

But let's talk about that in a more specific sense now, because I know we've gone through this process with every ingredient. And every time we bring a new product up, it's the whole process all over again to make sure every ingredient is nontoxic and sustainable and ethical. And we've definitely picked some hard-to-find-and-source and a little bit obscure ingredients that are not in a lot of products. So maybe you're starting with the toothpaste because that's kind of our cornerstone product. I've, like, been delving into that world for over a decade now. We source things... Like for instance, let's talk about hydroxyapatite, which is I think maybe something a lot of people aren't necessarily familiar with. I wasn't until I kind of did a deep research into remineralization and, like, the pH and oral microbiome in the mouth, which I can talk a little bit about in a minute. But can you talk about the sourcing of kind of the individual ingredients in the toothpaste, and specifically maybe hydroxyapatite?

Emily: Absolutely. So our hydroxyapatite is mined. It's ethically mined in France. That's where all of it comes from right now as long as we can. And again, that's another thing that sometimes holds up production is getting that over here and getting it over here safely. It remineralizes teeth and it replaces all of those lost minerals, such as calcium and phosphates, that you're going to lose naturally just through eating and acidic foods and bacteria that live in your mouth. And you have little teeny cracks and crevices in your teeth just naturally from eating and living. And so hydroxyapatite actually...the calcium...ours is called nano-hydroxyapatite which means teeny tiny particles, and those get into the cracks of the teeth and mimic natural enamel and fill in all of those cracks. And a lot of people, a lot of our customers, will ask how long does it take for that to take place? Is it after so many weeks of using your tooth toothpaste or so many months? And the answer is no. It can happen within 10 minutes, it starts to fill in those little cracks and crevices. So it's an incredibly amazing ingredient. We are very excited to have it in our toothpaste.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. And I think that's the thing a lot of people don't realize. One thing that does set us apart is a little different is because we use hydroxyapatite and not fluoride, which we can talk about in a minute, and because it's a natural mineral that mimics the body's own...what substances that we're using it is what actually our teeth are made of and our enamel is made of. Unlike regular toothpaste, you don't have to be so careful about spitting it out. In fact, you can actually leave those minerals on the teeth. So when I use our toothpaste, I spit but I don't, like, rinse my mouth out because I actually want those minerals to stay on my teeth, especially while I'm sleeping.

And the reason you see those labels on regular toothpaste about, you know, don't ingest more than a pea-sized amount, like, rinse your mouth out is because there are compounds in that that in larger than a little

dose can be really, really, really dangerous. I think back to when my oldest kids were toddlers, I was at a friend's house and she freaked out because she thought her toddler had eaten a whole tube of toothpaste and she called poison control, and this was conventional toothpaste, and they said, "Well, basically if... I mean, we can take her in, but if a toddler's ingested that much fluoride, like, there's not much we can do because it's super toxic." And this is something that is on most people's bathroom counters.

And so that was a reason I knew...actually one of the reasons I started formulating and making my own toothpaste years and years ago is back then there were no options that were fluoride-free, and if they were, they actually made your teeth feel yellow because of things like glycerin which is used in a lot of natural toothpaste, which we've gone to extreme lengths to avoid using in ours because it blocks that mineral process. So just how you talked about hydroxyapatite adds those minerals back to the teeth. Glycerin actually can coat the teeth and keep that process from happening for anywhere from 30 minutes to hours. We don't actually know how long it blocks the minerals and it disrupts that natural process, because our saliva naturally should have minerals in it. A lot of us, if we're not eating a nutrient-rich diet, may not already have that many minerals in our saliva to begin with. So the hydroxyapatite helps kind of add those minerals right directly in the mouth where you need them. But glycerin would kind of undo the whole point of that by keeping your teeth from being able to absorb them in the first place.

But let's talk about some of the other problems with regular toothpaste, because I know you've seen the sourcing of all of this as we've been involved with these manufacturers. And people have probably seen some of the info about regular toothpaste containing fluoride, for instance. Also, microplastics, that was a big thing that came out a couple of years ago was finding microbeads of plastic in toothpaste, all kinds of sweeteners that you definitely would not wanna eat and I don't want in my kids' mouths. But let's kind of compare and contrast natural toothpaste, like ours to conventional toothpaste, and some of those things to be aware of.

Emily: Definitely. And natural toothpaste is, you know, the buzzword. What they all wanna put on their labels is fluoride-free. And you said it and I'm just gonna say it again. So many natural toothpastes have glycerin in them, and we see it time and time again with a lot of the big names. So glycerin, for those of you who may not know, it kind of creates a coating on your teeth. It's made from GMO vegetable oils. And it makes you feel good, because when you rub your tongue across your teeth it feels very smooth. And then you think, "Oh, it feels so smooth. Now my teeth are clean." But because you have that film on your teeth, as you said, Katie, the minerals from your saliva can't get to your teeth to remineralize them. And also, that film attracts plaque. So it's actually doing the opposite of what you want it to do. So yes, a lot of natural toothpastes are fluoride-free, but they have glycerin and they have added sugars, which of course, if you're brushing your teeth, that doesn't make any sense at all. So not even just conventional toothpaste but even natural toothpaste, you wanna read the label. There are several ingredients that many of them have that we absolutely do not, and glycerin is definitely one of the big ones.

Katie: Yeah, and to touch on fluoride a little bit more, because that's used in most conventional toothpaste. Like you mentioned, most natural toothpaste avoids it, and the reason for that is definitely a controversial topic. But the way I kind of explain it is that they found some evidence that fluoride might make teeth harder.

When you really delve into the science though, it also might make them more brittle. So, like, hardness doesn't necessarily directly correlate with not having cavities, and there's a kind of like really interesting and convoluted history of fluoride and how it's a byproduct of other industrial processes and then got added to toothpaste and now to our drinking water, which is a whole separate topic, because to me, that's like... Even if it worked on the teeth that would be akin to eating bandaids to fix a cut. It's not gonna do that from the inside out, but now it's become so widely used.

And if you look at the actual data in PubMed, we know that fluoride, especially in certain doses, can actually cause tooth discoloration. It can make teeth more brittle, but also, when we're talking about certain doses, it can cause neurological problems, people experience acne, or perioral dermatitis on their mouth from it, skin problems. Like, people tend to react to this. And the reason I first started researching it when I had thyroid problems was that fluoride mimics certain things, including iodine, so it needs to bind and be used by the thyroid, and fluoride can kind of disrupt that process. So when you're putting fluoride in your mouth multiple times per day, and then you're trying to support your thyroid, it can be counterproductive. So that's why we see a lot of natural toothpaste avoiding fluoride. But like you said, to get the consistency right and to try to keep teeth smooth and all those things we want, a lot of people substituted in glycerin. And to my knowledge, we are the first toothpaste that uses hydroxyapatite and avoids glycerin entirely, and I know we went to extreme lengths to be able to do that.

Emily: You're absolutely right. We are the only one that we have found so far that has hydroxyapatite and does not have glycerin. And as you said, fluoride, you know, they thought it was good for your teeth and, you know, it can actually cause tooth discoloration. You might have seen this. I remember seeing...especially children because they use too much toothpaste and you'll see spots on their teeth, and that's actually from fluoride. And, you know, as you mentioned, acne, other neurological problems. And even if fluoride was really great for your teeth, it could only potentially be good for your teeth. So whenever it's on your gums and your tongue and your mouth and it's running down your throat, that's all bad. We all know how porous our mouth is and how quickly things are absorbed into the bloodstream from the mouth. So even if you said fluoride is great for your teeth, good luck getting it on your teeth and nowhere else in your mouth. And as you said, adding it to water makes zero sense. There's nothing that tells us that fluoride is good to be ingested. That's not a good idea.

Katie: And another interesting thing to think about there is, like you said, it's not...if we were talking about just the teeth, that would be one thing. But as we know anybody who's in into the health world, no part of the body exists in isolation, and this is especially true when we're talking about the mouth. And we know that there's whole books, everything from nutrition and physical degeneration on, talking about how oral health affects the health of the entire body. And this is why we see certain increased risk of even things like heart issues and people who have gingivitis for instance. This is why people with certain medical conditions take antibiotics when they get dental work, because anytime you're disrupting that oral microbiome and crossing that barrier in the mouth, you have potential downstream effects throughout the entire body, including in the gut, including in the heart tissue. And this is why teething is actually an immune event.

For any moms who are listening, you know that when babies' teeth first break, you're having a meld of the oral microbiome and the internal environment of the body, often for the first time, and that's why they can experience an immune reaction and have the drooling, that, like, mild fever, even some of the, like, sinus symptoms. It's because there's an immune process happening. And so, knowing that, it's important to be aware of that in what we put in our mouth. And so we've been really conscious in developing these products to not put any oral microbiome disrupting ingredients and to take into account that really delicate and amazing process, because the mouth is certainly not a bacteria-free environment, and, just like our gut, it needs positive bacteria. And so you don't actually want to like over-sanitize the mouth by using something like alcohol-based mouthwash all the time and trying to kill all the good bacteria.

We've had dentists on this podcast before who talked about there's almost kind of a balance between the gingivitis and the Strep Mutans bacteria that causes cavities. And the good balance is when you have the right good bacteria in the mouth and you're supporting it, but if either end of that spectrum gets out of balance and you lose any of those good bacteria, that's when the kind of pathogenic bad bacteria can get out of balance and then you see cavities or you see gingivitis. So part of EWG verification and our own sourcing in those ingredients is making sure that we were using things like green tea you mentioned that naturally support the oral microbiome that help target the bad bacteria without disrupting the whole oral microbiome. And I'll put some links in the show notes to blogposts on Wellness Mama as well that talk about how you can even compound the benefits of our toothpaste by how you eat.

And if you're eating enough fat soluble vitamins and a nutrient-dense diet and avoiding large sources of things like lectins and phytic acid, you can help your body in that remineralization process because that's the whole premise of anything natural, especially our products, is you wanna work with the body and not against it. So we are careful to design the products that are going to work with the body's natural pathways to get the effect we want rather than try to, like, blunt them, like a lot of conventional products do. And I would guess a lot of people listening are familiar with the concept that what goes on your body goes in your body. And EWG talks about this with their Skin Deep database. We know that the majority actually of chemicals that go on the skin, in the mouth, in the hair cross into the bloodstream in some form or another. And this is a great reason to avoid harmful chemicals in personal care products, certainly.

But with Wellnessee, we took this in the other direction and realized if what goes on the body goes in the body, we can use this to our advantage. And so rather than just avoiding the bad stuff, how can we put in the good stuff so that we're benefiting the body through these daily interactions? And that's why we focused first on toothpaste and haircare because those are things most people use every single day. I realized I had family members and friends who, despite eating organic and living very healthy lives, were still using certain conventional shampoo and toothpaste because it got the effect that they wanted and they weren't willing to sacrifice how they looked or how their teeth felt or how their teeth looked just for the sake of being natural.

So we knew when starting Wellnessee we had to create products that didn't just work as well as natural products, they had to work as well as conventional products and still maintain that really strict degree of sourcing and environmentally friendly and nontoxic for the body. And so we kind of built on this premise of

food for the teeth that you're putting on...you're putting this in your mouth so that your body can make your teeth stronger while you sleep. With haircare, it was how do we, instead of stripping away all the natural things in our hair and in our scalp, how can we naturally clean the hair and also put positive things in that benefit the hair and the scalp? I know we get reviews about people who see their hair getting stronger and thicker, and it's because we've switched that, kind of turned it on its head. Instead of what most shampoo is, which is detergent... Like I often say, you know, your hair is not dirty laundry. Don't use detergent on it. Instead of that, we have built basically a hair food.

So let's talk about the haircare a little bit. We have shampoo and conditioner, multiple formulas of each. And just like the toothpaste, we've gone through this really extreme degree of sourcing and verification. But I feel like it's important to talk about the differences not just in the formulation, but also in the effect and the feel on the hair. Because while it does get hair actually cleaner than most conventional products, it feels slightly different, especially when you're adjusting because you're actually feeding your hair versus stripping everything out of it. So talk about the sourcing of our haircare a little bit.

Emily: Absolutely. So as you said, most conventional shampoos and conditioners contain sodium lauryl sulfate, SLS, and what that's doing is it's stripping the natural oils from the hair follicles and from your scalp as well. And whenever it does that, when it takes all those natural oils away, it's going to cause breakage, brittle hair, and lots of frizz, especially if you have natural body in your hair. And so our shampoo contains several ingredients that are going to keep your hair really soft, really clean. and nurture it as you said. We use avocado butter and that actually protects against UV rays in the sun, because we all know the damage that sun can do to your hair. We also use argan oil, which is like a conditioning treatment, and you'll see that in a lot of standard shampoos. We use that in our conditioner to soften the hair as well as aloe. And aloe helps with itching and dandruff and it's really great for the scalp and the skin, you know, beyond the hair. A lot of people are so concerned with their hair they don't think about their scalp underneath. And then we use lavender as well and it's a great detox for the scalp, and it kind of naturally balances out the pH of the hair.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. So just like the toothpaste, we're putting all those beneficial things in. And like you mentioned, I think you're right. Most people think of their hair and we have so many products that go in our hair, but shampoo especially is going directly on the scalp. So anytime we can put something beneficial in that that's gonna nourish the scalp, that's where you actually improve your hair. I think people realize, but, like, once hair is out of your scalp, it's actually dead. The growth process is happening inside your scalp. So we actually wanna think of the scalp as well when we're formulating these products and really nourish and understand what's happening in the follicle and in the head and not just on the hair. Because yes, we want our hair that's out of our scalp to look great, and that's one thing we definitely look at. But also, how can we over time make sure the scalp stays healthy? Because just like the mouth, the skin has a microbiome and the skin can absorb nutrients. So anytime we can put beneficial things in there, we are able to create a positive effect over time.

And like I said, we started with haircare and toothpaste because I feel like those are some of the most used personal care products. And we knew we were taking on a tall order tackling the tough ones first. And this has

kind of been our guiding principle in what comes next as well. So I know another one that we're working on, that I think we can finally announce and this will be the first place we've really announced it, is we've got deodorant in the works. And are you able to talk about this one yet? Can we talk about it publically?

Emily: We sure can. Yes, absolutely. And just a quick note about our ingredients. On our website, we have listed every single one of our ingredients that is in every single one of our products because we have everything in there for a very specific reason and nothing extra. So if you are on our website, you can see that and we explain to you why we have chosen each ingredient and where it is sourced from and its purpose. So deodorant. This is one of those... This goes back to product development and just the fun of it all. This was actually supposed to launch in July and we are now in October and we are still working very hard. Because I am a very particular person, and, Katie, you are too, and we don't release anything subpar. So we are really trying to nail in this formula. We want it just absolutely right. Because natural deodorant is a tough switch for a lot of people. You do have to go through the detox process. And so our deodorant is amazing. We're just also working on the components. We wanna use a recyclable tube. And getting that to work with our formula has been a little bit tricky, but we are releasing a deodorant hopefully very early 2022.

Katie: And this is another one that we thought was so important because it's something most people use every single day. And like you mentioned, there is an adjustment process, especially when you're used to antiperspirants and formulas that have aluminum in them because those are actually biologically changing your armpits and stopping you from sweating. And I know... Like, I used to use antiperspirant all the time and my body had gotten used to that, and it did take me a couple of months of adjustment to use just normal deodorant without antiperspirant, but the good thing is the body does adjust. And it's a really important process, because we have lymph nodes in our armpit, actually some of our bigger lymph nodes and that's an important part of our immune system. And putting those chemicals and blocking sweating actually can have harmful immune effects over time, because sweating is...

Actually, a new study just came out on this. Even compared to urination, and other forms of detoxification, sweating is the most effective detox pathway for chemicals like BPA, which we know we're exposed to in huge amounts in today's world. And so if we're blocking one of the places we sweat the most, we actually are blocking our body's detoxification process. And so just like that, we wanna not just avoid the harmful stuff, but the skin has a microbiome as well and the armpits are part of the immune system, so we wanted to make sure we were supporting that. So I know we have a lot of nourishing ingredients in there as well that nourish the skin and that help avoid odor without blocking the natural detox pathways in the human body.

And if anybody's new to natural deodorant, I'll link to the armpit detox post I have as well because that helps speed up the process. If you can pull out some of those things that store in tissue, because we know things like aluminum and BPA plastic chemicals can actually store in the body we don't even know how long, but potentially for years and years, especially in lymph nodes and fatty tissue, and you have a lot of that kind of tissue around the armpits. And so, we were really careful to avoid any of those harmful things, and then, just like in the haircare, to use skin-supporting ingredients that can feed the skin and not block those natural processes. Are there any other upcoming products we're allowed to talk about yet?

Emily: Well, we can. A quick note on the deodorant. This is my favorite analogy because whenever you say natural deodorant, a lot of times people cringe because they're afraid of the detox process and they're afraid of switching and then being embarrassed in public. And I always say, "Well, whenever you have to go to the restroom, you don't try to hold that in, do you?" And I feel like that about aluminum in your deodorant, because whenever you're using an antiperspirant, your body is trying so hard to get rid of something and you're preventing that. And just the same, we sweat all over our body, but you wouldn't rub a deodorant stick all over your body. Clearly, your body's trying to get rid of something. Let it do that. And whenever you switch to natural, yes, there is that time period where you have to, you know, kind of transition, but whenever it's done, you're gonna notice a whole lot less armpit irritation, especially if you shave your armpits, and without them being clogged all of the time. A lot of people have itching armpits, and that's from the antiperspirant. So this is a switch that, although it takes time, is so well worth it. I just wanted to say that about deodorant.

Other upcoming products. Oh yes. I'm very excited about this, and I know your listeners will as well because so many of them are parents. We are launching a children's toothpaste early next year, we hope January. It looks like January or February. We're going to have a children's toothpaste. It's based on all of the same ingredients as our whitening toothpaste and it is strawberry flavored with natural strawberries. So we've had a lot of people tell us, "I love your toothpaste, but my little ones think it's hot because it's peppermint." And so we're excited to be launching that early next year.

Katie: Yeah, I know. And definitely, you guys will hear about it more and more because I'm so excited to share those. And I'm glad you brought up that point about the deodorant as well, because I think itching is something people are scared of with natural deodorant and it's part of that getting rid of the antiperspirant ingredients in your skin and also making sure you don't have too much of overly-alkaline ingredients. Like, baking soda can be great. Too much baking soda can cause itching. So I know we tested a lot to make sure we were right in that perfect ratio. And then also just to be aware of as you make the switch, your body will adjust and sweat less over time as it gets used to not being blocked from sweating. Because just if you block that process, your body tries to compensate and actually tries to sweat more. So long-term overuse of antiperspirants can actually make you sweat more, just like long-term use of harsh detergents in your hair can actually cause your hair to create more oils because your body's trying to compensate and to keep your hair healthy. And so in both of those cases, these products, they might take a very short adjustment period, but then long-term you're equalizing so you have less of that that you're fighting and you're working with your body's natural process.

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I think another thing that we do that I know is a big cost to us as a company and I have not really talked about as much as I should've is the packaging side. And I think the reason this is important... I've talked about single-use plastics and how harmful they are for the environment. And I know we have gone to extreme lengths, especially these last two years with all the sourcing delays, to source sustainable, ethical solutions here as well that are safer for the environment, safer for people. And so we use a sugarcane bioplastic which a lot of people might not be familiar with. But can you explain what that is and why we chose this over other options?

Emily: Absolutely. So of course, we use the sugarcane bioplastic instead of regular plastic. Regular plastic has petroleum in it which is a non-renewable resource. We will run out. And so our packaging is made... They can be made from several different things. Ours is sugarcane. They can also make bioplastics out of things like corn starch, and straw and wood chips. There's all different types and these are renewable resources. And ours can be composted commercially. And in order to be certified to be commercially compostable, it has to break down. It has to disintegrate by 90% within 90 days. And so to think that our tubes can break down 90% within 90 days is huge whenever you think about the life of regular plastic. And of course, this does come at a cost. So our bioplastic costs almost 20 times more than plastic. But again, this is something that we feel very strongly about. And outside of our tubes, we have our dry shampoo and our upcoming deodorant, and those are in post-consumer cardboard. So they are in paper and can be recycled as well.

Katie: Yeah. And we haven't even talked about the dry shampoo very much. Let's just touch on that one a little bit, because, just like the other haircare, the same principles apply. We're trying to not put anything harmful on the scalp. We're also trying to nourish the scalp. And so we use, just like the other products, ethically sourced, sustainable, natural ingredients. And we chose a powdered version of this because of all the things that come along with spraying aerosol onto the scalp and how most dry shampoos use an aerosol propellant, which can actually damage the hair follicle over time and kind of also increase that oil creation process in the scalp. But talk about some of the ingredients we chose for the dry shampoo.

Emily: Yes, so we definitely wanted to stay away from the aerosol cans as you mentioned. And a lot of people who use the aerosol cans do find that over time they're using more and more and more of it. And so ours is in that... It's in a cardboard kind of a shaker. And so there's a little bit of a learning curve there we've noticed and you have to... The easiest way that I say to apply it is to either put it into your hand or directly onto the scalp and then either work it in with your fingers or with a makeup brush is the best way. And it has a sodium bicarbonate which kind of helps soak up those oils naturally, and also tapioca starch, which acts the same way as the aerosol. It soaks up the oils. If your roots get a little bit dark because they're a little dirty, maybe a little oily, it soaks that up as well and it just adds a little bit of body. That's probably my favorite use for it is... I have very, very straight hair and it creates body and volume.

Katie: Yeah, I think the makeup brush tip is super helpful, even to like apply... I sometimes will just sprinkle it on my countertop and use an old makeup brush and brush it into my roots. And that was a funny one because a couple of guys that we have on the team at Wellnessee, when we first were formulating the dry shampoo. They had never used it before and they were like, "Wait, so it's like white dirt that you put in your hair?" And I was like, "Yes, all women understand this. It is exactly what it is and we love it."

Emily: Yes, if I can skip a day, I love it. Absolutely.

Katie: Well, especially as a mom. Yeah, any day I don't have to wash my hair and dry it and spend half an hour doing that saves so much time.

Emily: Absolutely. You asked about upcoming products, and we have another one. I'm already thinking about January and February as you can see because my mind is always several months ahead of us. But actually, we're gonna be launching just this week... We are launching our charcoal toothpaste. And clearly, we are leaning heavily in the oral care line and that is because we have seen such a need for it. As you said, our ingredients are unlike any other. And so the charcoal toothpaste that we're launching this week, it's very dark. It's that black charcoal that you want. It detoxes. It's also whitening toothpaste. And we do suggest with this one that you kind of use it in rotation with your whitening toothpaste. You don't wanna use charcoal toothpaste two to three times a day every day. We recommend it kind of like a two to one. But we're excited to be launching that later this week.

Katie: Yeah, that's a great tip is... Because charcoal, if used like you said multiple times a day, can over clean the teeth almost and pull too much out. And so if you balance it with the whitening toothpaste, then you get to keep putting the minerals in. And I feel like that gives you... We got to test these early, a perk of being in the formulation side of it. But I think that gives you the widest teeth too, which if anybody's watching the video, they can see your teeth, which are amazing as well. And let's see. Anything else on the upcoming product front or any of those that you wanna talk about before we move on?

Emily: I have a couple of more in the pipeline but nothing I wanna talk about yet because I don't wanna get excited. As I said, the deodorant was supposed to launch several months ago and it's still not out. So I have lots of things that I want to do but I don't know how long it's going to take, so I'll stop there.

Katie: And we'll keep you guys posted as we get closer to being able to share some of those new products. And before we kind of get to the wrap-up questions I love to ask, I wanna also just briefly talk about pricing and margins because I feel like that's an area where most companies don't really talk about it. And this is an area where there's a huge difference when you're talking about natural products versus conventional products, both in the cost that goes into them and sometimes even the margins. But we've kind of really delved into all the different ingredients and sourcing and how high quality they are, but I know for people who are used to buying a \$2 tube of toothpaste, for instance, ours can seem expensive. And I just wanted to maybe like touch on the pricing side and talk about how...

I've mentioned so many times on here, whenever you buy a product anywhere, you're voting with your dollars. And moms are the biggest voters in that realm and have the largest purchasing power, which is why I've said for years and years that moms have the power to shift society and when moms make changes, society changes. And so we are trying to help make those changes on the societal side as well now as a company and really drive forward these natural products. But also as individual consumers, we really get to make shifts when we vote with our dollars. I know you've kind of touched on a lot of the different areas of the packaging being more expensive and how stringent we are with our sourcing. But just talk a little bit more about pricing and why we're choosing these higher-cost options even knowing that we're not gonna be able to make a \$2 toothpaste by using natural ingredients.

Emily: Absolutely. And I've said this before, you have to invest in your health. And if somebody said gasoline is expensive, but if you want you can put, you know, corn syrup in your engine in your car instead, you would say, "Well, no. That's not good for my car. I'm not gonna do that." But people tend to be okay with putting bad things in their body. You know, you know that you can hit the drive-through and you can get a cheeseburger for \$1. But whenever you think about processing that meat and all the employees in there and, you know, housing them and the lights, that cheeseburger probably cost about \$0.12 to \$0.15 cents to actually make and that's scary. That's too cheap.

And so it's kind of that same idea. You're right. We cannot make a \$2 toothpaste, but invest in your health, especially with your children. And that's easy. I'm just like you, Katie. Once I had my first child, I was really

worried about everything I was going to be putting into her body. And we already know the dangers of conventional toothpaste. Although it costs more than conventional toothpaste, it's not gonna break the bank and you're investing in your health, and I think that's really important. And that's why we are so excited to get this children's toothpaste launched because we're hitting a lot of really concerned parents, but their kiddos don't wanna try it. So we're excited about the strawberry toothpaste for that reason.

Katie: Yeah, my kids have gotten to test it. I know yours have too. They're super excited for it.

Emily: They love it.

Katie: Yeah. Like we talked about all the toxins in toothpaste. This is one that if... My youngest I don't think she would at her age, but if she decided to just eat the whole tube of it, it would actually just... She would be above her daily recommended allowance of calcium, but that's about it. I wouldn't have to call poison control, no massive ill effects would happen. So I'm really excited to be able to get this one out for kids. Like you, I like the mint one, but I think a lot of kids are gonna really love the fruity flavored one. And it will be the first to face that is fluoride-free and glycerin-free in a kid flavor. So we're super excited to launch that one.

For anybody listening who has heard all of these things that you talked about and how much you're managing, and I see it firsthand every day. Another question that I get asked sometimes, and now I get to ask you, is any tips and how do you do it as a busy working mom with young kids at home? I've said before, you know moms have... We have so many amazing opportunities in today's society. We also have a lot on our plates and I know a lot of us feel overwhelmed a lot of the time. So any tips for balancing work in life and mom life especially?

Emily: Oh, boy, that's a tough one. Well, I have a very good and understanding boss, so that helps. Thank you, Katie. But I think a lot of times whenever we talk about natural products and making these changes in our home, it can be really overwhelming. And a lot of times, you know, I'll be listening to you or I'll be reading an article and I'd just feel overwhelmed with all of these changes that I'm supposed to make for my health and my children and my home. And I always tell people just take one step at a time. Don't think about getting rid of everything in your house that may be toxic. You will start looking at everything differently and that's good, but just little baby steps. So, you know, the toothpaste is a great example of that. I'm sorry I keep referring to the toothpaste, but I wanna tell you this.

I know people who aren't even very health conscious that have made the switch to this toothpaste seamlessly. And so a lot of times whenever you switch to a healthier or a natural product, it's difficult. Like the deodorant, there's gonna be a detox process. The toothpaste is an easy, tiny step that you can make today for you and for your family. And so I think that's one of the ways that I don't get overwhelmed. I try to balance all of the things, as we all do. I try really hard to be present at work when I'm at work, and when I am home, I am home

with my children, and I turn off everything else, I don't get distracted with devices and things like that. And then whenever I need my alone time, then I'm in the woods.

Katie: Running 50 miles. I love it. I agree. And I think that's... You're right. Take the baby steps and do the simple switches first. And I know that's also why we focused on these particular products first because we wanted them to be relatively seamless switches. Like you said, oral care already is, and if you just switch those basic products, it's kind of the rule of 80/20. You're getting rid of 80% of the harmful stuff that you would be encountering in your personal care products every day and so then you don't have to stress as much about the other ones. I know that's why we tackled the hard ones first and it's been quite the endeavor to do that, but I'm so excited and proud of the products we have and the upcoming ones. And another question I'd love to ask toward the end of interviews is if there is a book or a number of books that have had a profound impact on your life, and if so what they are and why?

Emily: All right. Well, one that's timeless to me and always relevant I would say is "The World is Flat" by Thomas Friedman. And I know it's an older book, but it just has always spoken to me about how, over time, our world is getting smaller and smaller. And of course, because I work with people all over the world every day, I take very late, late phone calls because that's when everybody else is waking up. Our world is getting smaller and smaller. And he meant it in an economic perspective. You know, if you are a baker, you are competing with the baker next door. And you know that today we're competing with markets all around the world all the time. So you know, that's kind of a professional book for that reason. But personally, you think about social media and how much things have changed and how tiny our world is and how you can keep up with friends and family all over the world. So I just think he was definitely thinking ahead of his time whenever he wrote that book and it's just always spoke to me, especially because I do product development, so my world it seems very small, you know, since I work all over the place.

Katie: That is a new recommendation. I'll make sure that's linked in the show notes as well, as well as of course too all of our products and how you guys can grab those for your family. Emily, I'm so personally appreciative of all the hours you put in and how you keep everything on track for all of us and also for all... I know you've learned to this whole world even more and all the research you put in to making sure everything that we put out there is the absolute highest quality available. I also know how busy you are so I'm grateful for your time and being here today. Thank you so much. And thank you for your time and your wisdom in all this.

Emily: All right, great. Thank you, Katie.

Katie: And thanks as always to you guys for listening, for sharing your most valuable assets, your time, your 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.

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