



Episode 498: Matt Bertulli From Pela on the Lie of Recycling, Composting and Reducing Plastic Use

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com. That's wellness with an E on the end. And in this episode, I go deep on plastics, environmentalism, and so much more, especially the lie of recycling, effective composting, and how we actually reduce and get rid of our plastic exposure.

I am here with Matt Bertulli who is actually a software engineer that reluctantly turned into an entrepreneur and marketer, and who is obsessed with reducing garbage and waste. He's dedicating his time to removing waste from the human experience. And we talk about a couple of specific ways that he's doing that today, but

we also go deep on why recycling is the biggest lie of the last 50 years, the reason that most plastic never gets recycled, why the vast majority of plastic never could be recycled, the worst offenders when it comes to this, and why waste is one of the biggest opportunities of the next few decades, shocking research on recycling being a marketing campaign from the oil industry, the two-prong approach to actually solving this problem and what the future of innovation looks like in this area. We also talk about a product he has called LOMI, which is a rapid home composter that tackles food waste that I am really excited to try with my family. So we go in a lot of different directions. I learned a lot, and this was a fun conversation. So let's join Matt. Matt, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Matt: No, thanks for having me.

Katie: I am so excited to chat with you today because I have been writing about the problems with disposable plastic use for over a decade now. And I know there's so many directions that we can go in this, but I think I wanna jump in with one of the more controversial points that I have in my show notes, which is the idea that recycling is the biggest lie of the last 50 years. And I know this is important to what we're going to talk about today as well. But can you explain that statement?

Matt: Yeah, yeah. This might take a while. I mean, we can do the short version of this or the long version. Look, I've said this before, it usually gets people a little perked up because the blue box is something that people feel really proud of using. Right? So, when they... I think it's a blue box where you are too. It is where I am. Yeah. Where we put our plastic, our paper, our, you know, in some places metals, glass, whatever, you put it in the blue box, and you feel really good because it goes away and it gets turned into something new. But reality is that, you know, paper is probably the most recycled. I think it's like 68% of all paper product can be recycled or is. But plastic, it's like 10% or less actually gets recycled. So, we're sold as consumers, we're sold this idea that we're doing our part, we are putting things where they should go, but what's happening behind the scenes is those things never get to where they should go. And the real truth, and the reason I say it's a lie, is the vast majority of plastic that we buy and use in a given day as consumers is not ever gonna get recycled. It can't be. Right?

The example I give people is the Pringles can. Like that thing is like the worst invention for waste ever is a Pringles chip. It is paper, there's plastic, and there's steel all in one convenient little tube that we... I like Pringles, so I get it. And that thing will never be recycled. It just gets thrown away. So, you can throw it in the blue bin all you want, right, but those waste management companies are never actually recycling those. And I'm sure you've seen, I know you've probably seen this, but like there's tons of stories now coming out from all over the world on just how broken recycling actually is. Right? And I think most people don't know. I think a lot of people are starting to tune in and realize that, like, yeah, most recycling actually winds up either being burned or thrown in landfill even though you put it in the right place as an individual. Right? So, that's... Yeah. I think it's the best PR marketing campaign big oil ever produced, like, by a mile. It's absolutely brilliant. I think it came out actually recently last year, I believe, the new story broke that recycling was actually created by the oil industry to get people to feel good about plastic. The whole thing was a PR stunt, like, not even stunt, it was a campaign, a multi-decade campaign. It's so impressive.

Katie: Wow. In our area, it came out a while back that there was a company that was picking up recycling because it's not a public service here and, eventually, it was discovered, they were just having people paid to pick up the recycling and then taking it to the landfill. Apparently it's way more common than expected.

Matt: It's in Canada. It's actually a public service here. So, like, it's part of our taxes. And I think last year one of our newspapers, they put tracking units in three different... What happens with recycling is it all gets bundled up, right? And then once it's picked up, it's sorted and bundled up, but they actually put little GPS trackers in the bundles and wanted to see where they wound up. And they did this with three different waste management companies and two of the waste management companies took the recycling to just be incinerated.

Katie: Wow. Well, and I think the thing here is, like, people are well-intentioned. I think... Another note I have for you... is, like, you know, we all are starting to understand the problem with plastic use and especially overuse, which we are seeing at a worldwide scale. And everybody wants to, like you said, feel like they're doing their part. So, it's kind of sobering to realize, like, this is not actually happening, but then that leads to the question of like, I guess, A, like, "What are the problems we're gonna continue to see because this is not happening?" and, B, "What can we do about it?"

Matt: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, waste is like... I love waste. I think waste just represents one of the greatest opportunities of the next 10, 20, 30 years to actually do something meaningful. The whole world, we've never been more divided. And one of those things that divides a lot of people is this concept of climate change, right? Which is also just terrible marketing. But what I don't like about climate change as a broad conversation is it centers on this concept of carbon, right, and, you know, CO2 or methane or all kinds of greenhouse gases. And the issue is nobody can touch and feel these things, so nobody really understands them, like consumers, individuals. I work in this space and I still have a hard time explaining carbon to people.

But waste, however, waste is something that, like, we all take out every week, right? We all take the trash out every single week in most places, you know, sometimes it's every two weeks. It's tactile, right? If it piles up, we see it. If it's at landfills, we see it. If it's on our beaches or in our oceans, we see it. So, waste is something that, like, I believe, that humanity can actually rally around. I've yet to meet a frickin person that would argue in favor of throwing more plastic in the ocean. I've not met one of those people. You can find a whole lot of people that will argue over climate change, but you will not find a human being is like, "You know what we should do? More plastic in the ocean. That sounds like a great idea." Right?

So, like, to me, it's individuals where there's opportunity. And I think this is like...it's the favorite part of waste is... And I know you're a big fan of this. It's, like, there are so many ways that you can actually reduce your waste without ever feeling like you sacrifice anything. That's the other part of climate change I absolutely hate is, like, we're told as individuals that we have a personal carbon footprint and that we have to stop traveling

and stop driving and it's all sacrifice-based, whereas I feel like, you know, the waste that you produce in a home doesn't need to be sacrifice-based. It doesn't mean stop consuming. It doesn't mean, you know, give up your comforts in your life. It's actually probably quite the opposite. There's so much you can do to buy better product, right, different product, different ways to consume that are not sacrificial. I love it. I think waste is just...is magic. I think it's the best area for us to focus on.

Katie: That's exciting to hear you say because I think you're right, it's something people have an awareness of, but I don't know that most people think of it from an opportunity standpoint.

Matt: Sure. Imagine if waste is the thing that unites everybody. Like, we joke internally in our company, it's like, "Could you just imagine if garbage is the thing that brings people together?" because it's like death and garbage, man. It's the two things that human beings have in common. It's not death and taxes. Not everybody pays taxes. Everybody dies and everybody throws stuff out.

Katie: Well, okay. So, I wanna go deeper into this because I've written before, like I said, about plastic both from the health perspective and how damaging it is....

Matt: Oh, yeah, it's huge.

Katie: And then also from the environmental perspective when we know there's these like floating islands of plastic the size of states that it's saturated the oceans and now we're finding it under 40 feet of ice in the Antarctic. So, this is a, like, worldwide global problem.

Matt: Yeah. It's in your fish. If you eat fish, it's in the food supply. They found microplastic in raindrops. You're literally raining plastic.

Katie: Wow. So, I mean, that brings the question, like, what can we actually do about it at that point?

Matt: I mean, at that point, so like, look, there's two kind of tracks that all things environmental have to go on. One is, at some point, we have to start stopping things at the source. So, like, how much do we produce? That's where business and government does come in. Consumers have to choose to consume less plastic. So, like, are there ways to, you know, swap out. And I know you've written on this, I know you've talked about it. There's so many ways that you can swap plastic out of your life in a home, whether that's the bathroom, the kitchen, toys. There's so many places that you... Like in our home, like, I have a six-year-old daughter. I'm not as nuts as you are, I only have one child. And look, we have almost no plastic toys. Right? So, like, all of our toys for our kid have always been wood, you know, like, as natural as possible.

You definitely lose some of the cool toys, but, you know, kids have crazy imaginations. I don't feel like she's missed out on life. But I think that you go room by room in a house, you can find a lot of plastic as a consumer. And then businesses just need to...and they are, the largest consumer goods companies in the world are moving away from single-use plastic or, like, the way I term a high-velocity plastic where there's lots of it. So, think like grocery stores, department stores, that kind of stuff, packaging like Amazon boxes. They're all investing in moving away from single-use plastic. They totally are. That's the future. So, that's stopping at the source.

The second part is, like, what do you do with all the plastic that's already in the world? And that is a way harder task. Right? We're not getting rid of it. That's the fun thing about plastic and I'm sure everybody has heard this at some point, like, every single ounce of plastic ever made still exists today. And it will for hundreds of years no matter how many times you make it into something new or you try to, it is not going away gracefully. Right? Plastic has no graceful end of life. The best you can hope for is it gets back and it gets a second life or a third life. And we've already proven that that doesn't work very well.

So, I'm super bullish in it in that I believe that very quickly we're gonna cut off the source or as much of it as possible, but I think the harsh reality is, there's a lot of it in the world still and it's gonna be around for a while. There is no magic place that it can go. You can't turn it back into dirt. Maybe we can make roads. I've seen people take old plastic and, like, they actually make asphalt, like, the building infrastructure, installation, stuff like that that's way more long-term usage instead of, like, short-term high velocity. Everybody likes to focus on straws and water bottles, but there's so much high-velocity plastic in the world, like, uses of it. And that's what big oil companies love. They love the high-velocity stuff. It's used and thrown away in hours.

Katie: And I don't know if this is true or not, but to your point about stopping it at the source, I read somewhere that even if all humans individually recycled 100% of everything that they...which we just talked about, is not gonna happen anyway, that would still be a very small percentage of actual plastic because it's these corporate companies. And so even if we all, like, "did our part," we wouldn't be making a very big dent.

Matt: No, you really wouldn't. I know, that's the funny thing for us, like, as a company. And I don't know when it was. Maybe it was three years ago. Do you remember the big push on straws? Everybody was, like, losing their minds about plastic straws. I saw something at one point, which was if like you took all the plastic straws in a given year and stuck them in shipping containers, it would be like just a handful of them. The number of actual, like, 40-foot shipping containers full of straws for all humanity was, like, you could count them. It really wasn't that much plastic. It was such an inconsequential amount that it was almost laughable in environmental circles. What it was was, like, it was a nice talking point. It was a great news headline. It gave something people could say no to easily at restaurants when somebody asked you, "Do you want a straw?" you could say no. Although now with the whole pandemic, single-use plastic usage was up, like, 500% year over year. So, it's been the best year ever for plastic manufacturers because everything went back to single-

use. Airlines. Have you flown in this whole thing? It's like everything that they had done to get rid of single-use, it's all back. It's disgusting.

Katie: It's like back to the extreme. It's like everything's in plastic with plastic lids and plastic bag.

Matt: All of it. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. We're so terrified now of germs, like, everything is in plastic. So, it is like... There's only so much that people can do. It's not to say that people can't do anything. I also don't believe in that narrative that when it comes to social and environmental issues, they are just the problems of government and big business. I don't believe that. I think there's actually a lot of power in doing little things as individuals. Like, number one, you feel good. Number two, you're also teaching your kids something really, really important, right? The reality is, it's probably not you and I that's doing much for the world. It's gonna be our kids. Right? It's like, that's the ultimate leverage, it's your children. So, you know, I think that people just need to realize, like, you can do little bits, you can do something, but you are right, big business, for sure, has a massive burden on their shoulders. And how we sort of encourage or force them to change is the big question, right? People have a lot of power there too.

Katie: Yeah. Let's talk about that a little bit because it's like, it doesn't take a lot of research to figure out what a widespread problem this is and the statistics of what we're facing if it doesn't change. But what does changing that actually look like?

Matt: So, the only time we ever talk about voting is when there's an election. I think people...a lot of people don't realize you vote every day every time you buy something. If you really... You want Coca-Cola to stop making plastic bottles, stop buying them. Nothing will force Coke to change faster than if their consumer who is what pays them shows up and says, "No more." The government can't do it. Right? Nobody can make a company change quicker than money can. Right? That's the whole world works on one economic system. Right? Like the Western world, at least. And I think that that's where people actually...it doesn't feel like it, I think, in a moment a lot of times, but when you spend \$1, you are absolutely voting for how you would like the world to work.

So, the more that you can direct your individual dollars as a person, it cumulatively...like it really matters, right? And you're seeing this in the, like, snack space right now. I know it's like completely... But like organic and healthy better-for-you options are growing so fast in the U.S. to the point where, like, old companies like Mars, Pepsi, Coca Cola, all these guys that pedal in sugar, high fructose corn syrup, they're all buying the health companies because those guys are eating market share. Now the only reason they're doing that is because the consumer is showing up and saying, "I don't wanna put this shit in my body anymore." I swear like a trucker, so I'm gonna do my best not to. It's the problem with being Canadian.

So, I think, like, people have so much power, and the more they realize it, I think that it creates a snowball effect. And you probably have people in your audience that are very switched on to this, you know, and they do everything they possibly can because, in some sense, it makes them feel good, for sure. And then it makes them feel even better that they know that they're the ones that they're actually forcing change. And it didn't require a picket sign, no protesting, you know, no big sacrifices. All they did was just spend their dollar in a different way.

Katie: Absolutely. I definitely hear from readers and listeners who are even much better than I am in that world and they are completely zero waste. But I think a lot of people listening are somewhere on that spectrum of trying to make these changes... And I've said for years that moms are one of the most powerful forces on the planet for creating these changes.

Matt: Oh, my gosh, yes.

Katie: Because, like you said already, it's our kids who are gonna also help in the future, but also we control so much of those dollars. The purchasing power of moms as a collective has the power to change these within a decade.

Matt: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I think it is the most powerful force in consumerism, is moms. No question. There's lots of ways that, like, economists love to slice and dice that, but, yeah, you talk to anybody in any family household and it's typically her that controls the majority of spend for the home. And then if you look at waste, in particular, like, yeah, there's a lot of waste in fashion, for sure. So, like, what you wear every day, men and women, right? There's a lot of waste in the fashion industry. But high-velocity waste, like really high-velocity waste, that's all in the home. It's what you wrap your food in and it's what gets shipped to the house via Ecom, whatever. Right? And that is largely, like in my house, 98% of all household spending is my wife, like, easy. I may get consulted every now and again, but it's highly unlikely.

Katie: Okay. Let's define terms a little bit more. You've mentioned high-velocity plastic waste. Can you kind of define what falls in that category versus, like, other types of plastic that are more longer used? And I know you mentioned, like, it can be even used in homebuilding now and we're seeing some there.

Matt: Totally. Yeah. Like a good form of...a good use of plastic...because this is it, plastic is not evil. Plastic is actually... If you were just looking at plastic, it is what has enabled a lot of modern society to exist, right? Best example I can give you is an automobile, like, any kind of car. The fuel efficiency of a car and the ability for it to go as far as it does right now on a tank of gas is because at some point, we started using more plastic in the car than we did metals and that strength-to-weight ratio changed dramatically, right, which means the cars got way lighter. And that is a great use of plastic. It's gonna last a long time. High velocity to me is like any plastic that you're buying that's gonna be thrown away in under three months. And so that could be from a plastic

water bottle that's like you drink it, it's gone, so it's super-fast, you know, in seconds in some cases. All your food packaging, meat trays, all the stuff that you get at sports stadiums. Those are all like super high-velocity waste streams. Right? There's tons of it and there's more and more all the time.

Katie: Are there or is there a horizon for more sustainable alternatives to things like that? Because also, like, obviously, plastic...

Matt: Totally.

Katie: ...is a convenient product, and so that's why it's used so often. Is there a future where there's more sustainable options for these?

Matt: Yeah. This is the whole purpose of our company, like, I've dedicated the rest of my working life to this, is like I just think that... I believe... And there is... The material science is there now. Right? So, there's biodegradable compostable options. It is advancing at an alarming pace. So, rewind two years ago and it would have been really hard to make a lot of product out of something compostable. And now you have companies, like, there's a company out of Arizona called Footprint. They make... It's like a pressed paper material. It's really innovative. They've done incredibly well. But they're making, like, meat trays. you know, like, the styrofoam that is usually in a grocery store, like, in a meat section. They're making those. They're doing, like, all those to-go food containers like salad bowls and, like, the stuff that you would get your Uber Eats order in.

And they just did a deal. I think the entire Phoenix Suns stadium is gonna be switching over to Footprint's products, which means that whole stadium has just ditched single-use plastic in all their products. So, these kinds of companies, not only are they in existence now, but they're scaling at an incredible rate. I know Unilever is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on this. Pepsi. There's Danimer Scientific. There's so many companies working on better materials that have, like, what we appeal to call just a graceful end of life. Right? They can be turned back at something, like, dirt is the... Ultimately, like, you want everything to go back to the earth. Right? If we can make more dirt, that is a huge win, like, that's carbon capture, that's less waste. That's a lot of things.

So, the world is moving in that direction. A lot of consumers may not realize this, but, like, it's happening. And over the next 5 to 10 years, like, I wouldn't be surprised to see most grocery stores have significant chunks of what you're buying. The packaging is gonna be compostable, biodegradable. Right? It's the whole reason we made Lomi was, like, we need to make sure that people have a place to put this stuff. Not just food, but, like, all these compostable packaging things, where do they go? Not everybody has green bins and compost at home and, like, they don't have the ability to throw that stuff away. Right? So, like, I do think that there's a future where it's less wasteful. Waste-free, like zero waste, I would love that. I just think that's so hard. And

it's such a...it's a lofty goal. And I think it's a really cool lofty goal, but, like, I like to call it waste-free. It's like, can you create a world that is waste-free? And there's circular. There's a bunch of stuff there, but it's gonna happen. For sure it's gonna happen. There's hope.

Katie: Yeah, you're right. And it's exciting to see how quickly that's changing. Like with our company, Wellnesse, we use biodegradable sugarcane bioplastic, which a couple years ago was so extremely difficult to get. It's still a lot more expensive than traditional plastic, but that needle is starting to move. And at least it's available now, whereas it wasn't in the past. And I think, like, I'd love to hear more about your company as well because I know you've innovated in two different areas here to help you move in different directions. So, kind of give us an overview for anybody who's not familiar with you guys.

Matt: Yeah. So, Pela. So, we started out...we may actually made a compostable phone case, was our first product. So, we're a material science company. So, we... I have a bunch of, like, biology people, chemists, hardware engineers, like, just a lot of nerds. I'm a software engineer. So, we work on how do you design waste out of goods in the first place? So, what you're talking about with your products, which by the way, I love your toothpaste.

Katie: Thank you.

Matt: Seth sent me one and I'm like, "This is a really good toothpaste." So, that kind of material science where you take, like, high velocity, single-use plastics or, like, non-obvious sources of waste, and can you make them out of a new age of material? That's what Pela does. Right? Now, as Pela was getting bigger and bigger and I think we're about 80 employees right now, a few years ago what we realized was people actually have nowhere to put a lot of these biodegradable compostable materials. So, like, if all of a sudden Amazon changed all of their plastic fill in their boxes, you know those like bubble mailers and stuff, to compostable, where would people put that? Throwing that in a landfill is terrible, right, because it just makes more methane. That's not great. Commercial compost facilities aren't common, particularly in the U.S., even, you know, most of the world they're not common.

So, the second thing that we made was this product called Lomi. Right? And Lomi is the first of its kind. It's effectively a kitchen countertop composter is the best way I would describe it. It can take in your food and home compostable plastics and turn them into dirt while you sleep. So, instead of throwing away food or these other materials, you actually just make dirt that you can go throw in your garden. And in an average house, like, 70% of your waste is food. At least it is in my house. So, like, solving... As a company, the way we describe ourselves is like we're trying to design waste out of the human experience. Right? So, I'm really focused on waste. I love the topic.

Katie: It's exciting for me to hear you talk about that being a great place for opportunity and I'm hopeful that you're right that we're gonna see massive shifts in this in the next couple of decades especially.

Matt: You totally will. And I think it's companies like Footprint, Pela. There's so many. Even you guys. Every time a business opts to use this kind of material, right, that's another vote and that's telling the resin maker. So, you gotta think like all packaging, all products at some point starts off as like these little tiny pellets with, like, just resin, you know, and then that gets formed in the goods that we know. Right? Like my boom here. This is just plastic molded resin. So, your toothpaste tubes. That's just molded resin of some kind. Yours is coming from a sugarcane source. Our materials that we use a lot of the times are corn-based or hemp-based. There's so many sources that you can, like, actually make materials from. And this is a fascinating topic for people to dig into because it is, like, I believe there's tons of business opportunity here too.

I get asked all the time, like, "How do I help? I'm an entrepreneur. What do I do?" I'm like, "Go focus on waste." It's such a huge cut. Waste management alone is like \$2.5 trillion a year, just picking up and throwing things away, let alone, like, packaging and all the rest of it. So, we've just been super focused on this idea of, like, how do you design better things that just don't have waste in them? And then Lomi is like the... Think of it like Tesla home charge thing infrastructure. Tesla put a charger in everybody's home or gave you the option to. We're putting a little compost facility in everybody's kitchen. And then dealing with food. Food is like the most disgusting form of waste. It's just smelly and gross. And I hate it so much.

Katie: I'm so excited for Lomi. I cannot wait to try it out. And I think another important piece of this that you've mentioned a couple of times is, like, we're seeing this change because consumers are demanding this change and they're voting with their dollars. I hear people get angry when they're like, "Oh, this great natural company got bought by this massive company. And isn't that horrible?" And I'm like, "Well, maybe not because in order for this to change, like, we're talking about...we all can make a change in our own life, certainly, but also we need these massive companies to start changing." So, the fact that we have big...

Matt: Totally.

Katie: ...companies paying attention and buying these natural companies means they're starting to pay attention and that's where the big change is gonna happen because like we talked about, we could change every single thing in our daily lives and it's barely a drop in the bucket, whereas if Procter and Gamble makes a massive change, that is a huge environmental shift overnight.

Matt: Yeah. And I mean, like, this is it. It's totally... I think there are certain big companies that have zero desire to change, right, but I think we're in a world right now, at least in the conversations...and we talk to people at Procter and Gamble. That's a good example. Right? We have conversation with them. And there's desire. They see that the future is going this way. Now, this is why I believe that, like, business and capitalism

actually can be a pretty significant chunk of the solution here because if the consumer is demanding it and the shareholder is putting pressure on the board and the board of these big companies is putting pressure on the executives, that is where change is gonna come from at a significant scale. We don't... The world doesn't need you guys, as an example, to fix the toothpaste and oral care problems or bath care or like all of it, personal care, right? We need Colgate to switch their packaging over to this and Crest and like all... Now, there's a whole bunch of other problems with their products, sure, but from a waste perspective, you're 100% right, the leverage is in these large multinationals and what they can do.

So, it's really tricky. I mean, there's certain companies that I just despise them because they don't ever wanna change. But then I also know oil company executives who are some of the biggest investors in renewable energy. Right? And they're super bullish on it in 50 years. So, it's... I think we... I would advise everybody that, like, the best path forward is probably to not be so critical immediately of other people and companies and start thinking of, like, collaboration as really a path forward. I know it sounds kind of hokey, and maybe it's just the Canadian in me, but, like, I almost wanna say like, "Can't we all just get along and, like, really just talk this out?" Right? And these big companies are... At least the ones we talked to. And we talked to a lot of them because they come to us looking for help to make this kind of product, right? And we're really good at it. And there's genuine interest. We really engage them. We're engaging very high up the food chain. This isn't like, you know, the new employee at P&G who's doing this. You're getting attention from executives and C suites and people who actually can make a difference.

Katie: Yeah. There's not a dichotomy there. It's a both end, not an either-or, we need to change at all fronts.

Matt: Yes. Yeah. I know. And I believe that the more folks like you talk about this that have a platform, the more people will realize that, like, when they do see a PepsiCo is investing in compostable packaging and they just did... Like last year Pepsi did a big investment. I think it was last year. Maybe it was a long time ago. There's a company called Danimer Scientific. And they make materials out of PHA, which is another type of resin. Really cool stuff, like, has the potential to, like, dramatically change packaging. Pepsi makes that investment, then people will turn around and just go and criticize Pepsi because they're one of the largest, like, polluters in the world. Well, but they still made the investment. And you could argue, like, maybe they're doing it for PR only, maybe. But I feel like most of the planet is not evil. So, like, I'm gonna go with math here and say, like, there's a good chance those are good people at the helm, making the investment for the right reasons. Good chance. And there's definitely some evil folks out there, but, like, there's a good chance that they're doing the right thing.

Katie: Well, that's another thing I love having the show notes from you is that the idea that people are inherently good, they just need more opportunities to do good.

Matt: Totally.

Katie: And especially in a world where there's, like, a choice between, like, profit in these companies' perspective and doing the right thing. If we can make that choice easier as consumers by voting with our dollars, I agree with you, I have to believe people are inherently good at their core. And like you said, nobody thinks dumping plastic in the ocean is a good idea, including the people dumping the most plastic in the ocean.

Matt: Totally. And I think one of the biggest things that businesses can do, like, one of our focuses as a company is, like, how do we lower the cost of being green? Right? Because, like, we get this feedback all the time, it's like, "Your products are expensive." I'm like, "Well, they're expensive right now because they cost a lot to make relative to their more polluting cousins." You made the comment. I have a rough idea on how much more money your packaging costs for Wellnesse than the traditional stuff. We live in this space. When I make a phone case out of our materials, I know it's about 400% more money to make that case than traditional plastic. I know that. Now, it used to be 800%, so it's coming down. Right? But I think that businesses have to look at... So, green, so eco-friendly, sustainable products. For a long time, that was a way for companies to just charge more. They found a different way to position and there was a consumer out there that wanted that and was willing to pay for it.

My thesis is that if we really want massive global change, this needs to become the new normal. Right? And the only way it becomes the new normal is we need to make these kinds of products more affordable over time. And that is where big companies come in because their supply chains can do it, they have scale, they've got all kinds of stuff that's really important to, like, taking something and cutting its costs in half, and then passing that back to the consumer. So, I just... Even Lomi. Like Lomi right now, to me is way too much money, like, for scale. If I work backwards from the dishwasher. Every single home, almost every single home has a dishwasher. Nobody can imagine their life without a dishwasher.

So, the question I ask is, "How do I put a Lomi in every single home so that you've just stopped one giant source of waste?" Even if it was just food, and food was no longer going to landfill in the United States. The impact of that is gigantic. So, I worked backwards from that question and I started asking myself like, "I can only lower the cost of the machines so much in cheaper, better materials, more scale, cheaper labor, all that stuff, right? Automation, yada, yada, yada." So, then there has to be ways to engage governments, big business, other people to help lower the cost of a Lomi for every single house. So then the question I've been asking myself is like, "How do I make it free for people?" because that would be cool.

Katie: Yeah. And then people would hopefully actually use it and reduce that huge amount of waste. Let's talk more about that too because I've seen some of, like, information you guys have in the videos. I haven't gotten to try it yet, but I'm planning to. The concept is amazing. But give more details of, like, what all can go in there? How fast does it work?

Matt: Yeah, it's incredible. So, we've been working on this for three years. It works, like, beautifully well at this point. I mean, you're familiar with composting, right, and what that looks like. So, the big thing for people to realize is, like, we're not saying, "Let's take the compost process," which is usually about six months, you

know, depending on environment conditions, all that stuff, right, to get mature compost, which is nice and healthy, put that in your garden, which are compost. We're not talking about taking that and condensing it into, like, a day. That's just... I don't think that's actually possible. My science team is still trying to figure that out, but, like, it's hard to do. So, what we're doing with Lomi is we're saying, "Can we take the first 80% of the composting process and put that into, like, 4 hours, 12 hours, 20 hours?" So, like, when you go to bed and you start Lomi and you've put in all your kitchen scraps from dinner and the next day you have dirt. By the time you get to the next dinner cycle, that rhythm of the family, what comes out of Lomi can go into a garden, right?

So, it can take in all manner of food waste. No avocado pits, no bones. It's gonna be sort of like a...we call them recipes. Different types of things that you put in Lomi you're gonna produce different outputs. Like my wife the other day...we've had a Lomi at home now for two months and we just started shipping them to customers this week, like, we're ramping up production. And my wife put in soup and I got up in the morning and I'm like... She just took, like, old soup and, like, threw it in Lomi. And I got up in the morning, I looked it was Lomi, I'm like, "Honey, why does it look like soup?" She said, "I put soup in there." So, I'm like, "Well, that was..." She was like, "I was just curious to see if it could actually turn soup into dirt." I'm like, "No, it can't. It's way too much water."

So, it's really good at vegetables and fruit and it can take in meat. So, like, you know, fish and meat, which typically wouldn't go into compost because of vermin, rats, raccoons, that kind of stuff. You can put that in a Lomi with all your food. It's not gonna do really well with, like, if you just stuffed it full of pizza-like bread and cheese. It's hard to turn that into dirt. But yeah, like, whole foods. It's really good at that. Most people's regular everyday cooking and kitchen scraps, coffee grounds, paper towels. It's really good at taking all that and then turning that into dirt. And the cool thing is, like, the dirt that's coming out, we have one cycle that we call grow mode, right? So, it'll run for like 20 hours. That will actually have, like, macro micronutrient density. You can take that and put it in your garden and it will be healthy for your garden.

Katie: That's amazing. So, I know you probably don't wanna give away too much, but is this like a...

Matt: No, no.

Katie: ...temperature, heat, chemical change? How is this happening so fast?

Matt: Totally. Yeah. I mean, look, good composting is heat, humidity, oxygen, and bacteria. The last one is the one that, like, freaks people out, right? It's like you actually want good bacteria, microorganisms. You want all those little critters because that's what's eating things. Like when leaves fall in the fall, when they fall on the ground, you know, Mother Nature digests those, and that's like, that's worms and bugs and all kinds of little, you know, critters that do that. So, Lomi works is that we actually give the consumer a little...it's like a little

tablet. You know what? Think of it like a probiotic. Right? So, every time you run Lomi, you put in this little tablet, and that tablet is something that we've worked on, which it has the right microorganisms, the bacteria. It helps with smell, which is sulfur. It's doing all that work.

So, the machine is effectively it heats. It's got cycles in it, so it heats up and cools down. Temperature inside of a Lomi depending on your cycle will run between 160 and 220 degrees. It's monitoring humidity. We want dirt that comes out. We want the output to actually have some humidity. You don't want just, like, dehydrated, dry dust. That's not good. You wouldn't put that in your garden. You're not gonna grow tomatoes in dust. So, what it does is it's trying to mimic Mother Nature as much as possible and we're just using energy and a little bit of science to get there faster. Right? That is convenient for people. That's like the super high level of how it works. I actually probably couldn't even give you the, like, legit science behind it because I pay people for that. They're way smarter than me.

Katie: That's so exciting, though, and incredible. And I feel like I've been encouraging people to garden in whatever form they can, even in an apartment...

Matt: Totally.

Katie: ...can do a container garden. This feels like such a perfect addition....

Matt: Yeah. People who garden love this. This is gonna be, like, massive. You can buy less dirt. Right? It will feed your garden, for sure. We grow... We have actually grown tomatoes, peas, like, solely in Lomi dirt here in the office just to see, like, is it healthy? And we have...like, our lab has all the stuff to test, like, the health of what comes out of a Lomi. And really, a lot of it depends on what you're putting in. Right? Which cycle you run, how long you let that output sit afterwards. I collect most of what comes out of my Lomi. I collect in a bucket in my garage and I kind of let it just sort of mature over a few weeks and then I'll go throw it in my garden like one of my beds. So, it just gives you a lot of flexibility, right? It's like, if you love gardening and plants and, you know, all that or you just hate food waste, it's gonna be good for you.

Katie: Awesome. Well, I think, like, this is such an easy swap. And I love your comparison to a dishwasher. I hope things like this become as much a part of our daily lives as the convenience of a dishwasher.

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This podcast is sponsored by Just Thrive. A company very near and dear to my heart as I have seen the difference firsthand that their products make with my own family. And I've heard from so many of you sharing your positive experiences as well. I truly love all of their products, but I have to highlight a few that I love especially much. Their breakthrough award-winning probiotic is, hands down, the best one I've tried. It contains a proprietary strain called *Bacillus indicus* HU36, which produces antioxidants directly in the digestive system where they can be best absorbed by your body. These are also heat-stable probiotics, meaning they can actually survive the harsh environment of your digestive system and get where they're supposed to go. Their K2-7 is the first all-natural pharmaceutical grade K2-7 that supplies the optimal recommended dose for heart, bone, and tooth health. I'm also currently obsessed with their PREbiotic drink, which tastes like a delicious tropical drink and it creates a noticeable improvement in my digestion. And another quick tip, their probiotic is heat stable so I can easily add it to smoothies and even baked goods for my little ones who aren't great at swallowing pills yet. These are some of the only supplements I take with me when I travel and I recommend them to friends and family all the time. Check out all of their products at justthrivehealth.com/wellnessmama and use the code `wellnessmama15` to save 15% on everything.

What are some other areas of household waste that are a good focus? Like if someone is like, "Okay. I'm tackling food waste. Now what?"

Matt: Oh, gosh. The big one for me is, like, I go room by room, so kitchen and bathroom. So, bathroom is a really... It's surprising how much waste comes out of the average person's bathroom. That's everything from, like, shampoo and soap bottles to wrappers, toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes, makeup. Makeup is a massive one. I know people right now working on, like, better makeup containers. So, the way that we do it in our home is we go room by room and we just look at all the easiest sources of waste that we could swap out. Are there better versions, better as in less wasteful versions of those products that we're consuming fairly regularly? Q-tips, that's a good one. There's lots...there's definitely additional alternatives now to Q-tips.

These don't seem like big things, but, like, they add up to pretty big numbers when you go house by house and you realize, like, everybody has a morning routine, you know, and that morning routine typically involves a lot of plastic. It's like how do you minimize there? Kitchen is the same way. Kitchen is tougher, though, because, like, you can only do so much in a grocery store before you're dealing with packaging. Produce you can mostly get away with buying without plastic on it. But even then, like, how many times have you seen a bundle of bananas wrapped in cellophane? It's like why? Why did you do that? We don't need to wrap it in plastic, but it

happens. So, like, if everybody did a little bit in that area, in those two areas, your impact would be pretty substantial. And what I like about those two is it doesn't feel like you're being told to sacrifice.

Katie: I agree. I feel like, to your point, like, if the changes are easy and just can be swapped, people will be willing to make them. And I feel like in a lot of cases if you're intentional, not only are they as easy, they can also save money. That was our intent with Wellnesse's bottles if things are multi-use, like, our shampoo can also be a body wash. Our conditioner also works as shaving cream. Anytime something is multi-use, you eliminated a whole thing of packaging or... I invested in a company called Branch Basics. It makes a cleaning concentrate that you can use for literally everything in your home. So, now you're down to 1 bottle versus 12.

Matt: Yes. Yeah. It's wild how many products... So, this is such a good topic. Cleaning, all cleaning, the base components are almost identical. They've just changed the bottle. Right? Like body wash and shampoo, when you look at them chemically, they're not that different. And there's certain... There's special types of shampoos for different hair types. Absolutely. It's highly personal. But you gotta realize, like, most of the way things are in what you buy and what we consume is marketing. It wasn't actually a better product. It was just better storytelling. We told people like, "No, no, you need this kind of body wash and this kind of shampoo," instead of what it used to be was just, like, you just washed with whatever soap you had. And it was probably fine. Right? Cleaning solutions is a wicked, wicked area where, like, the number of bottles, like, in an average home of things to clean your house when they are fundamentally almost all the same.

Katie: And 90% water and...

Matt: Ninety percent freaking water.

Katie: ...plastic bottle. That's what you're paying for is, like, some fancy scent and 90% water when you can make that at home.

Matt: Yep. Yep. It's pretty... I think the... Yep. It's really disgusting. I'm a marketer myself, so, like, I get it, you know, this is what you do. This is how the world works. But yeah, people can do a lot of damage in a good way by just looking at some of those categories and realizing that most of what they're buying is marketing and it's not actually a better product for the job they're doing and there's better alternatives. And even the space-saving. Man, so much space.

Katie: Well, and another one I'll just address from the woman's perspective, like, the woman's feminine hygiene is a massive plastic...

Matt: Oh, yeah. Huge.

Katie: ...exposure area. And horrible for women too. And now thankfully, like, with all the innovation, there's totally natural alternatives like DivaCups or compostable biodegradable options.

Matt: So much. Yeah. Yeah. My wife turned me on to a bunch of this stuff. And I didn't even realize how much waste was there, like, as far as... If you think of, like, waste in terms of streams, right, you know, feminine hygiene, holy crap. It is...

Katie: Way more than plastic straws.

Matt: Yep. Way more, right? And the amount... Yeah. Because think of, like, there's not a lot of plastic in a straw. But in certain feminine products, there's a ton of plastic. And you're right, like, BPA phthalates it's, like, there's so much nasty crap in a lot of plastics too that are used that we are putting on or in us.

Katie: In a highly vascularized area that the body that the body is taking all of that.

Matt: Yeah. Pretty freakin terrible. And so, like, that one, for women who are listening, that is an easy one, like, to go after. Right?

Katie: Absolutely.

Matt: And you'll be healthier.

Katie: I have hundreds of testimonials on that blog post on my site from women who switched to a DivaCup, which is easier. You could change it in the shower. It's super easy. And their cramps went away. They stopped having all these weird symptoms. I'm like, "Who knew?" It's because you were putting chlorine and plastic in your body.

Matt: Yes. Yeah. You know what? It is funny. One of our core values as a company is, we call it, like, taking care of the whole, right? So, like the whole what? The whole planet, the whole person, your community, your family. Just think of everything in terms of whole and that we're all connected, you know, everything, right? So, like, often what is the case is that what is good for you personally from a health whether it's mental, physical, anything, psychological, or spiritual, it is good for the planet. And that's how I look at it. It's like, if I do something that's good for the planet, it's probably also good for me, especially when it comes to, like, plastic and, you know, what we drink from, eat from, eat, like, all of it. You have to look at what are you putting on or

in your body. And that matters. If you have a choice, like, if you are in the really great fortunate position to choose these kinds of products, they are actually better for you, fully.

Katie: Exactly. Well, to circle back to what we talked about at the very beginning, we didn't really go as deep into, like, the chemistry of plastic as I wanna make sure we touch on this because I think some people don't even realize we're talking about a petroleum byproduct to begin with.

Matt: It's oil. Yeah, it's friggin oil. You wouldn't drink gas in your car, but we take byproducts or derivatives of this thing that we pull out of the ground and we make all kinds of stuff out of it. And to me, it's... Again, there are good uses of it and there are bad uses of it. Like, I hate drinking out of plastic. I just hate it. It doesn't even... The water tastes weird. I think that once you start cutting it out of your life, you'll realize how much of an impact it's actually been having on you.

Katie: Well, there's a lot of evidence to show that these plastic byproducts, especially in the, like, short-term use plastics they break down a little bit more easily are maybe some of the reason we're seeing early puberty in kids, testosterone...

Matt: Totally.

Katie: ...decline in men. Like, all these health problems are so tied into this as well. And like you said, it can take literally hundreds of years for this to break down in the environment. So, it's not going away. Like even if we reversed it now we still have damage to undo. Do you see any innovation happening in the cleaning up the plastic that's already saturated the planet realm?

Matt: So, there's a ton of happening in ocean cleanup. I'm not super familiar if they're doing anything with, like, the human body. This is... The crazy thing is, like, we all actually have plastic in our bloodstream right now. That's how pervasive this is. Like, if you really wanna blow your mind, google that, that it's actually in you. Right? So, I don't know about that, but I definitely, like, there's some really cool ocean cleanup projects on the go, you know, some that are very well funded and they're getting more and more funding because, like, the important thing with the ocean, and I'm sure you know that, like, it's half the world's food supply, right, it's coming from the ocean. Now, it may not be half of the American's food supply or Canadian, but, like, it's half of the planet's food. And so if the ocean dies, we die as a species. It's not good. Right? So, like, you guys live near the ocean. I live near the ocean. People who live near the ocean automatically have an appreciation and respect for it. I don't know what it is. It's like an energy thing. I don't get it. I just know I feel it. So, it's such an important part of the ecosystem. Again, take care of the whole. We have to take care of the ocean. So, I think a lot of cleanup is focused there as opposed to, say, landfill and land-based waste, right? It doesn't show up and it's not as visceral as when it's on beaches and in the water. So, you know, most of the money is going there right now.

Katie: Yeah. Well, I'm excited, like I said, to see the innovation happening and for you guys doing at home innovation is really, really exciting because you're making that jump easier for so many people.

Matt: Totally. Yeah. Yeah. It's the reason that... I don't know if I ever told you this, but, like, the biggest argument against electric cars until Tesla came along was there's too many gas stations, so, like, nobody is gonna switch to electric cars, there's too many gas stations. And then along comes Tesla is like, "Well, we'll just put them in your home." And anybody who's ever driven a Tesla will tell you the thing that they love the most about their Tesla is never going to a gas station.

Katie: Oh, yeah. I actually... It surprises a lot of people. I drive one even though, like, people are like, "What about the EMFs? It's a giant battery," which I've tested. It's actually not nearly as bad as you would think. But it is so convenient. I forget that gas stations exist.

Matt: Yep. And when you have to go back to a gas station, you're like, "Oh, my gosh." So, by building that infrastructure and giving it to the person instead of to a centralized authority, which is like oil and gas companies, that's our theory on waste is, like, how much of the waste in your home can we actually give people technology and solutions to that it's their choice now? They have power. We're like the number... We've sold... Oh, man. How many are we at now? Lomi has only been in market for about five months, right? Well, we've actually been taking pre-orders. I think we're almost at 50,000 of them at this point. And number one piece of feedback we get is it makes me feel like I can do something. By far, number one. It's like, "All I gotta do is put food in here, push a button, and I'm helping? Sign me up."

And that's why I think, like, people are inherently good. It's just that they're not... All they're ever told is they're doing bad things. News media, government. I mean, geez, the concept of a personal carbon footprint was invented by an oil company. That was British Petroleum PR thing. Right? It's like they created the carbon calculator for people to put the onus of carbon footprint on people. So, as individuals we're always told, like, "There's just not a lot you can do. It's hopeless." And all we did was turn around and say, "Well, you actually can do something. All you gotta do is push a button." And it's amazing in how much that resonates with people.

So, I think there's so much innovation to come in this space. Right? And I think that it's gonna be consumer-led. I don't actually think it's gonna be government and big-business-led. I think it's going to be bottom-up in the same way that Tesla has figured out that demand for their cars comes from individuals getting it realizing how awesome their life is with this new type of car, no more gas stations, way less service, no oil, all the things that, like, you just forgot. You didn't even realize you didn't like it. You and I had Stockholm Syndrome from gas stations. We didn't even realize how much we hated going to the gas station until you don't have to go anymore. And then it's like, it's not a chance of never going back. So, how much of your life is like that?

Katie: Yeah. It's such a great comparison because it's, like, it made it accessible and also fun and to solve these problems. And you guys are doing that too because, like, even in places where there are commercial composting facilities...

Matt: Yeah, it doesn't matter.

Katie: The barrier of going there and having to...it's like a whole big ordeal, and now it's just in your kitchen. And it's just as easy or easier than throwing it in the trash.

Matt: Totally. And we're selling... The majority of our Lomis are being sold in areas where they actually have green banner food pickup because people don't like that. That was a government solution that was put on them to say, "Hey, just put all your food waste in this gross little bin under your sink and we'll pick it up once a week," but like when it comes time for you to bring it out, which is usually every day because we produce so much food waste, right, like, those little bags that the food is in, like, it's just slimy and smelly, it's not a great experience in the home. Right? Garbage has never been a good experience. We've just... We have Stockholm Syndrome. We don't know. We've just been held hostage by garbage and gas stations and all these other things. And that's a weird way to think of it. That's just how I think of it.

Katie: I think that's a great perspective. But as we get closer to the end of our time, I'm curious, are there any other...any unknowns or misunderstood things about this? Because I feel like we jumped in big with, like, tackling recycling being not what we think it is. Are there any other areas like that when it comes to this world?

Matt: Oh, my gosh. Yeah, there is. Definitely is. I wouldn't say unknowns, but what I would tell people is one of the biggest things you can do, one of the best things that you can do is actually just take one week out of your life. One week. That's it. You don't need to do this all the time. And pay attention to the types of things that you throw out. Right? Plastic is always made out to be the devil and it's usually the worst. But, like, look at how much glass and/or paper, steel, like metals, you know, like, pay attention because I think that once you know, like, this is sort of what all the way streams are, it really informs your purchasing and your lifestyle.

I had no idea how much plastic we were using. I didn't think we were bad as a family and then I guess we started paying attention to it. Take like a week, even a day would probably be enough for most people. And if you have a family of five or six, a day is enough. There's a lot of waste going on in a day. And I think that would open your eyes. And then, like, to me, that's what got me on this path of, like, "Well, where can I actually help? Whether it's in my own home or just, like, I'm an entrepreneur, so, like, I'm gonna go and build businesses around this now." I would go there. Most people never even think to think of, like, the different

types of wastes. All they see is, like, a bag full of garbage. That's all they know. It's like I take it out every week. It's weird, it's like, open up the garbage bag and look what's in there.

Katie: That's a great piece of advice. Another question I 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.

Matt: Okay. So, my favorite book, I probably gift this the most and recommend it the most is called "Influence" by a guy named Robert Cialdini. It's an older book, but it's just so eye-opening into how we make decisions as people and how emotional of a creature we are. Right? When we think that we're being analytical and, you know, we're actually being pragmatic or logical. People would say like, "I'm a super logical consumer." I'm like, "No, you're not. You're an emotional consumer just like the rest of us are." Right? So, like, Cialdini, "Influence." And he's got another book, "Pre-Suasion," that's like before "Influence." For understanding how marketing works, I think consumers need to know more about how marketing works so that, like, they can see it when they're experiencing it.

Bill Gates' latest book on climate is super fun to read. He actually explains things in a really nice way. Like, really complex science, right, it's like distilled down in a way that, like, it's enjoyable to actually...to understand. Here are all the levers in the environment. How important is concrete and steel? How we plug in? How do we move around? Transportation. He kind of breaks it all out. I love that because it gave me a different way of looking at the world, particularly when it came to, like, just environment in general. My gosh. Fun books for me are all the Yvon Chouinard books like "Let My People Go Surfing." He's the founder of Patagonia, right? So, like, he's also got a bigger book out which is, like, his life and stories. They're just cool stories from, like, the '50s and the '60s because this guy... Not '60s. Like '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s. He's in his 80s now. And he was like a dirtbag mountain climber that started a really big business. And he just tells all these stories about all these climbs and these outdoor adventures and... I'm an outdoors guy, so I love that stuff. Gosh, I read a lot. So, it's... I can go, like, super nerdy here for you. I'm super into crypto right now. There's just so much that I read.

Katie: Well, I will link to those in the show notes. I'm glad you brought up "Let My People Go Surfing." That was one I read a long time ago and I had forgotten about it and I think it would be a great gift for a friend.

Matt: It's so good. Yeah, it's so good. If you're building a business or even if you're like a community leader in some way, you know, understanding culture and, you know, like leadership, I just think it's great to... If you wanna be a leader, it's a great book.

Katie: Well, those will be linked in the show notes as well as links to both of the things we've talked about that you created that we have today.

Matt: Sure.

Katie: Anywhere else people can find you online or where is a good starting point to keep learning?

Matt: I'm only on Twitter. I try to keep, like, social media exposure really, really minimal. So, yeah, [twitter/mbertulli](#). Just my name. You can... If you google me, I'm easy to find.

Katie: Awesome. Well, all those links will be in the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](#). Thank you for your time today. This was such a fun conversation. Hopefully, it gave people some good hope and good direction. And I am really grateful that you were here.

Matt: Yeah, no, this has been fun. This is a lot of fun. It's also great to see you again. It's been a minute.

Katie: It has. We will probably finally have to catch up again. And thanks to all of you guys for listening, for sharing your most valuable assets, your time, energy, and attention with us today, we're both so grateful that you did. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama Podcast."

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