

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 5: Quitting Sugar, Natural Parenting & Pregnancy Tips

Katie: Hi. This is Katie from wellnessmama.com. Welcome to episode 5 of the "Wellness Mama" podcast where I provide simple answers for healthier families.

This episode's interesting fact is that people who laugh a lot are much healthier than those who don't. Dr. Lee Berk at the Lorna School of Public Health in California found that laughing lowers the levels of stress hormones and strengthens the immune system. In fact, six-year-olds have it best. They laugh, on average, 300 times a day. Adults only laugh 15 to 100 times a day.

But today's guest has improved my health by making me laugh many times with her funny yet always informative videos at mamanatural.com. She's mom to Griffin and Paloma, which is a beautiful name, I love it, and she's an awesome blogger. She and her husband Mike create weekly videos on all things natural, organic, and they often talk about pregnancy, natural birth, extended breastfeeding, natural remedies, healthy recipes, and more. And I couldn't be more excited. Welcome, Genevieve.

Genevieve: Thank you so much, Katie. I'm so excited to be here. Thank you for such a warm welcome.

Katie: Thank you so much for taking the time to be here.

Genevieve: Sure.

Katie: I'll go ahead and jump right in. I know you a little bit and about it myself, but I would love if you could talk about your own health journey and how you've gotten to where you are today. Did you have, kind of, a lightning bolt moment that lead to a conversion or did you have a long slow journey?

Genevieve: Well, you know, I think, I actually, kind of, had both. So let me take you back a little bit. It was around the year 1998 and I was really in a bad place. I was miserable. I was 60 pounds overweight. I was eating all the time. I had a very limited social life. Spiritually, I felt very disconnected. It was just affecting every area of my life.

And really the biggest thing for me is I could not stop eating. And for me, my kind of drug of choice, like I like to call it, was sugar. And I was the type of gal that I would have one cookie and then I'd want another one and another one and before I knew it, I was eating a sleeve of cookies and a box of cookies and I just couldn't stop.

So that went on actually for a couple of years. And I knew that sugar was my problem, but I just did not have, like, the will power to stop. And finally, by God's grace, it was actually New Year's Eve. And I, kind of, call it my defining moment or my lightning bolt moment, like you said, where I spent the whole day with friends that were going to go out, you know, for this big night on the town, and I was helping them get ready.

And then I was going back to my parent's house and they were going out, you know, for the celebration of the New Year and I was literally going to be home with the dog. And it was just a very, very sad reality for me, but I was in this place where I was embarrassed to, like, be out because I felt so heavy and so uncomfortable in my body. And I just felt, like, just ashamed basically.

And so, I remember that day and I remember thinking, like, if I continue eating this way I literally will kill my...you know, this is gonna kill me, you know. If not physically, just the emotional and mental pain, you know. I'm like, "I have to do something."

So, that day, I mean, I ate compulsively the whole day. I remember my last supper, I like to call it very vividly. I went to McDonald's through the drive-through and that was the time when they still had supersize. I got the Big Mac, a supersize fry, you know, of course, an extra large diet coke, and, like, a McFlurry, an Oreo McFlurry or something like that for dessert. And I ate all of that.

And then I came on home to my parent's house, I'm like, "I have to do something," so I just started praying. And at the time, I really didn't have, you know, a relationship with God per se. I think I just, I knew that God existed, but I didn't really connect with him, but I was so desperate, I'm like, "God, I will do anything. Please, I just can't eat like this anymore."

And that was, kind of, the beginning. So the next morning when I woke up, I just started that day forward just my health journey. So, that's really where it has been a journey. You know, I started just...the biggest thing for me was just eliminating sugar from my diet because that, for me, just created the cravings and stuff. So, getting rid of that and then just eating balanced meals, that's, kind of, how I started out.

And then, slowly it's, you know, kind of morphed from there. And, you know, I started at the time what was very popular was kind of the high carb low fat diet, and that's, kind of, how I ate because I didn't, you know, know any better. Then as I've gone along this journey, my diet has changed quite a bit.

And then, it just, you know it really started with the diet, but then it, kind of, infiltrated every part of my life. And that's, kind of, where it's really been a journey. And that was 15 years ago. I lost 60 pounds within the first year. I've maintained it all these years and I have not had any white sugar, you know, since then, by God's grace.

Many days I wake up and I'm like, "I can't believe this is my life," because it just goes to show miracles can happen.

Katie: That's an incredible story. And congratulations.

Genevieve: Thank you.

Katie: Fifteen years with no sugar is an accomplishment, absolutely.

Genevieve: Thank you.

Katie: That is a big deal. I think a lot of people really struggle to get off the sugar. And I was actually just talking to a friend today and she's like, "How do I actually do that? I feel like I'm addicted." So, what would be the biggest factors you saw in your success with doing that?

Genevieve: Sure.

Katie: Obviously, grace plays a role, but what else practically did you do?

Genevieve: Yes, I actually have a whole video on this, and so I will put that up for people, but, I think, some big things that really helped me...I think, the biggest thing for me was I always thought that I could have a little.

You know what I mean? I wanted to be a gal that would do things in moderation, right? So, I could have a piece, you know, a sliver of cake at my wedding or, you know, a cookie every once in a while or whatever, but for me, I really found I couldn't even do that.

So, I think, that was the biggest thing was just eliminating it completely, which is hard for a lot of people to wrap their brains around. You know what I mean? And that's not necessarily the solution for everyone. I'm just talking about my own personal experience. And the truth is, I still enjoy sweet things in my life. You know, I eat fruit and some dried fruit like coconut rolled dates. I mean, to me, that's like fudge or something. Now, I will do raw honey and some things like that.

So, it's not that I don't have any kind of sweetness in my life, but I had to get rid of that sugar, that refined sugar. So, that was one thing that really helped. I think being accountable to people. I got a lot of support, friends, family, faith, you know, communities, just so I could be accountable with someone about what I was doing, you know, and how I was...just checking in with people around it and with food. That was another thing that really helped.

Being sure I was getting enough liquids throughout the day. I think a lot of times I was eating because I was thirsty, you know? So, making sure I was drinking enough water, that sort of thing.

What were some other things? I think prayer. Just asking for help, like I said, and just being sure that I was eating well balanced meals, you know. I think a lot of times I would set myself up for binging because I would eat, you know, fiber ones cereal that's basically fat-free, and then fat-free yogurt, or if I ever had any kind of dairy products they'd always be fat-free, and so I was almost setting myself up.

So, now, I eat a very nourishing diet with plenty of fat, eggs, butter, avocados, and things that satiate my body so that I don't necessarily even have those cravings. But, I think, for me, the minute I eliminated the sugar, and it takes about 30 days for it to totally get out of your system, then, you know, it doesn't call to you in the same way.

And for me, the only times it would come up was if I was having an emotional issue or something was aggravating me, then I would sometimes want to go to it, but it wasn't necessarily the physical crave anymore because it's gotten out of my system.

Katie: Yeah. Those are great. Thank you. I feel like there's so much sugar around us in processed foods in general, and especially to children, which is one of those areas that just makes my mind go crazy is the fact that it's marketed to children constantly.

And I know both of our audiences are largely women and moms and we talk a lot about the future generations. So, I would love to know your opinion on what you think the biggest health struggle the next generation is going to face, especially dealing with things like sugar. What do you think that big struggle will be?

Genevieve: Well, I feel actually somewhat hopeful, which I know sounds weird, but I feel, like, we kind of peaked on unhealthiness maybe, like, 5 years ago, 10 years ago. I feel like now things are moving. The fact that, you know, Walmart and Target have organic sections and even, you know, preschools now don't want to serve juice. People are kinda getting it a little bit more, so I think that's really exciting.

Now, don't get me wrong. There's still, you know, a lot of sugar that's throughout our whole society, you know, definitely. And I hear you, you know, it is so sad that you go to these stores and literally at kid eye level is all this stuff that's just, like, you know, filled with dyes and sugars. It's just like, "Oh my gosh." Seriously, I feel like those people should be fined, you know, that are trying to market so directly to children.

But anyways, I do think we're making progress. I think actually what I've seen being a bigger...something I worry about more is just the sedentary lifestyle that I think...you know, when I was a kid, in the summer or after school, I would literally be like, "Bye, mom" and I would go outside. And we would just play outside like all afternoon. We would make up games. We play a lot of times with just the natural stuff around in the backyards, make forts, do that sort of thing. And were really just in the earth and used our imagination or creativity.

Nowadays, there's so many things through technology and iPads, and TV, and, you know, videogames and stuff that comes to the kids that entertains them that they don't have to use their imagination as much or not reading as much. You know, that's what I worry about more is just kids not getting outside enough, being out in fresh air, being in the elements, and using their imagination.

I think that that is so important just in building self-confidence, and feeling good in their bodies, and just helping establish good healthy activity at an early age.

Katie: I absolutely agree. And I'm sure you've seen some of the recent studies showing, even as adults, how bad being sedentary is and how even if you're sitting down all day, it doesn't matter if you exercise you're still at a higher risk for all these problems, so that's a great point. It's important to move. And, I think, kids do awesome at that. They don't exercise. They just move all the time...

Genevieve: Exactly.

Katie: ...when they're allowed to.

Genevieve: Exactly.

Katie: So, I would love to switch gears to some...

Genevieve: Sure.

Katie: ...of my favorite topics...

Genevieve: Sure.

Katie: ...which are pregnancy, breast feeding, and natural parenting. And I know that you write a lot about these, so, I would love to know, how did you come to these conclusions? Because I feel it's a journey for most of us and it usually starts somewhere around the time we have our first child, so I'd love to hear your story.

Genevieve: Definitely. Yeah, it is such a journey. It is. I'm still learning. And so, for me, when I got pregnant with Griffin, who's my first child, I wasn't necessarily thinking about natural childbirth. I just remember

growing up mom had a really large C-section scar, because back in the day, I mean, they really would cut women open. And she had this big slash down her stomach and I remember thinking, "Oh my gosh, I don't want that. I don't want that." It scared me, you know? And so, that was, kind of, how it started for me actually, if I'm completely being honest.

So, I started research a little bit, like, you know, "How to give birth without," you know. Because I knew a lot of my friends, I had babies a little bit later than some of my friends, a lot of them ended up having C-sections. Someone introduced me to the movie "The Business of Being Born" and that was a huge eye-opener like, wow, birth doesn't have to be this, you know, medical procedure. It could be something different.

And then I found a local midwife and they were actually like the biggest midwife in the Illinois. They were a really thriving office. So, I got plugged into tons of different resources through that office. And so then my husband and I signed up for Bradley Birthing Education Classes and that opened up our eyes to tons of stuff.

So, that was, kind of, how it started, and just by getting educated and learning more. It was like, "Wow, I really do want to go for this natural childbirth." And, you know, I learned not only the affect not only to mom but baby of some of these interventions and stuff like that. So, that was kind of my journey into wanting to have a natural childbirth. It didn't go the way I thought it would go, but I certainly, you know, kind of wanted it to be more natural in the way that it was for thousands and thousands of years before, you know, medicine got involved.

I mean, thank God, we do have C-Sections because they definitely are necessary in some situations, but I think that, you know, we can default there and go there to quickly in, you know, Western medicine here in the United States, so.

Katie: Yeah, that's a great point. Actually, I would echo that because I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for C-sections. With my third, I had placenta previa and it was definitely lifesaving, and I'm super grateful for that, but at the same time, a lot of conventional medicine would say I should have had a C-section with my next two pregnancies and they were my most wonderful natural births.

So, yeah, I just think you're right. We just need to let our bodies' wisdom take over sometimes. So, I'd love to know, too, have you had any struggles along the way with your journey towards natural birth and natural parenting?

Genevieve: Yes.

Katie: Or, have things gone how you hoped?

Genevieve: Yes. No, my first birth was 27 hours. I was pushing for over four hours. I ended up needing...they were talking about forceps. At that point, I was so tired, I'm like, "Can I just go to bed and I'll wake up tomorrow and deliver him?" because I was just exhausted. And they were like, "No, we can't do that."

So, then she, the midwife, gave me two drops of Pitocin. And then I was finally able to push out my son and I had a two degree tear. So, it really didn't go the way I want it to at all, you know? It was a lot longer than I ever desired. I had a tear. I had to rely on Pitocin.

So, I had to go through a grieving process after that birth and I was so stunned at how hard it was. It felt so hard. In the midst of it, I couldn't believe how physically painful it was and how far I felt from God. I really just felt like so human throughout the whole experience.

And, yeah, so, it definitely did not go the way I had wanted it to go, but I learned a lot and I think it was just part of my journey. And my second birth was so wonderful, you know. So, I'm grateful in some ways that I had the first experience because, first of all, I can empathize with so many mamas out there that have hard births and it also made that second birth that much sweeter.

And I did some things a lot differently to prepare for that second birth, you know, because really you walk into that birth experience and you don't know what... you know, you can prep as much as you possibly can, but it's not until you actually experience it that you can know, you know, what it actually entails. So, yeah, I mean, so, that was definitely a huge struggle.

Breastfeeding was so much harder than I thought. Again, I just thought you just put the baby in the boob. Easy, right? Just like I thought, you know, you squat, and you push out the baby. And it's so not like that. At least it wasn't for me with my first baby.

So, breastfeeding was very challenging. I had a very fast letdown. I had a lot of...you know, probably too much milk. You know, my son was really struggling at the breast and I had to get a lot of help. You know, thank God for lactation consultants. To me, they are like angels walking on this earth because they have helped me so much.

So, I worked with them. They gave me some tips on how to, you know, position my baby and to do different breastfeeding positions to help with the milk, and the letdown, and stuff like that, and I was able to get through that. But the first six weeks of breastfeeding I was like, "Oh my gosh, I do not know if I can do this." Like, I can totally see why people say, "Let's not do this, let's just go to formula." So, that was a big struggle.

So, yeah, there's definitely been things along the way that have been hard, but I think, it's about getting the support that you need, because there's tons of support out there, talking to other mamas, you know, watching YouTube videos, learning from other people, and just keep plugging along.

And you do the best that you can at the end of the day. Breastfeeding doesn't work for every mom. You know, some people have glandular issues. Some people have milk supply issues, you know? You do as best as you can, you know? I don't co-sleep. We don't do that as a family. I wish we did, but it doesn't work for us for lots of different reasons. You know, there's some things we do. We can't do everything crunchy. You know what I mean? We do as best as we can. So, that's gonna be all of our journeys as we try to live healthier and more natural lifestyles.

Katie: That's great advice. I'd love to know...I feel, like, a lot of women and I know I was this way when I was pregnant with my first one, there's so much unknown going into your first delivery and all the being a parent for the first time or maybe a mom has had, like you, a less than ideal birth experience, which mine was like that also.

So, what advice would you give to a mom who maybe just starting out to help her have a more healthy natural pregnancy?

Genevieve: Yes. Well, I would say definitely Red Raspberry Leaf Tea. I did not do that with my first pregnancy and I did with my second, and it was night and day. My uterus was on fire my second birth. I mean, it was like so efficient. That muscle was just like toned and, I mean, my contractions were so powerful, you know, that it went very quickly.

My second birth was absolutely wonderful. So, I would highly, highly recommend drinking Red Raspberry Leaf Tea. I started my second trimester...I actually started in my first, but I started to get a little bit of uterine cramping, so the recommendation really is more to start in your second trimester. I drank it from my second trimester on. And the last week before Paloma was born I would do like double brew, you know, so it was extra strong, and I would drink like a quart a day those last couple days, and she came out...I literally had, like, two hours of active labor. I almost did not make it to the birthing center in time.

So, that would definitely be one recommendation. Definitely fermented cod liver oil. I think that's so awesome for so many different things. What else? I would definitely do exercises. I know this is the last thing you want to do. Trust me, I resisted this like the plague, but doing some excises for optimal positioning of your baby because that will just make your life so much easier.

So, we have a blog post on that, you can go to also spinningbabies.com, and you can do daily exercises that will help get your baby in the most ideal positioning. And that will just make it so much easier when you go to give birth. So, that's something I always like to tell mamas. And then just having some kind of support system. You know, if you are, you know, more spiritual or religious, you know, doing some prayer, doing some prep work spiritually or emotionally to get that support you need.

Get a doula, have your husband, whatever is going to work for you because you're going to have to dig deep, you know, when you're going through this experience, and so to have some kind of touchstones or inspiration or, you know, strength or security to get you through. And then just watch a lot of positive birth stories. I think that also can help a lot, too.

Katie: Yeah, I would agree with all of those 100%, for sure. And, kind of, an off topic question, I'd love to know, you talk a lot about alternative and natural ideas on your blog and I know you have a video with your husband doing the nutty pod and some funny things. So, what's the most crunchy thing out there that you've ever tried?

Genevieve: Gosh, that's so hard to say. I would say the one that I get the most, "What?" from conventional people, now, it's almost becoming mainstream in the crunchy world, but definitely was eating the placenta, you know, postpartum. That probably got the most, "Yuck. Why would you do that?" of all the things that I've done. Yeah, so, I think, you know, eating the placenta after I gave birth, and I had kind of an interesting experience with it. I did it because a lot of moms had wonderful experiences doing it.

I know a lot of moms that struggled with postpartum depression, with low milk supply, with terrible energy, with a lot of postpartum bleeding, and they consumed their placenta. Most people do it through placenta encapsulation, which is the way I did it, and all those things go away. And so, I decided, "Well, you know what? I'll give it a whirl." I didn't do it with my first birth. I'll try it with the second birth.

And I actually found myself...I did not have a good experience with it actually. I found myself becoming weepy

and kind of aggressive, you know, like I had these weird emotions, and I also found myself having way too much milk. So, I actually...I stopped taking the placenta pills. I still have them in my freezer, you know, in case I need them, you know, some other time, but I would say that that's probably the crunchiest thing I've done is that, you know, ate my dehydrated placenta.

Katie: Nice. Even though it wasn't the best for you, would you recommend other women look into that if maybe they have low milk supply or if they have hormonal issues after pregnancy?

Genevieve: I definitely would. The thing that's nice about it is you always can just stop. You know what I mean? You can try it and if it doesn't work for you, just stop taking them. So, that's the thing that's nice about it. It's not this permanent decision, you know, or it's not going to permanently scar you.

Excuse me. It's very quick. I took the pills for a couple days. I felt those effects and then I stopped taking them. I would say 12 to 24 hours later, I felt back to myself. You know what I mean? So, it goes through your system pretty quickly. So, yes, I would. I've heard too many good stories from moms that really did struggle and how life changing it was to, you know, have those pills, not to say to give it a whirl.

Katie: Yeah, for sure. I can't believe that we're already getting, kind of, close to the end of time. So, I wanted to make sure I include the three questions that I always ask at the end.

Genevieve: Sure.

Katie: And the first one is what advice would you share with others that you wish someone had given you years ago?

Genevieve: Listen to your body. Listen to your body. Don't listen to Dr. Oz or Oprah or the newest diet craze or, you know, some blogger, you know. You have to listen to yourself. Listen to your body. And so, I followed, you know, the high carb, or I should say, high-carb low-fat diet for a while and if I'd have really listened to my body I wouldn't have stayed on that for so long, you know? I think, for me, you know, after I eat a meal, can I go four or five hours without getting hungry? Can I, you know, feel good? Can I feel strong?

Like, listen to your body whether it's with diet or exercise. Don't try to fit yourself into some kind of mold or some kind of paradigm that you think you should be doing. Listen to your body. If you're tired, don't work out that day or go easier that day. If you're hungry, maybe increase your fats or your proteins. You know, play with it, but just, yeah, listen to your body.

Katie: That's a great point. And, I think, probably both of us as bloggers would probably say even though we write a good deal of health information on our sites that that absolutely applies to what we write. If it doesn't work, you know, personalize it all for you.

Genevieve: Absolutely. Exactly.

Katie: I think there's some great general principles that you can take from, but then figure out what's gonna fit your family.

Genevieve: Absolutely.

Katie: All right, so also I always try to leave listeners with one thing that they can do, like, right away that's actionable that would help improve their health or their family's health, so what would be one actionable step that you would suggest that someone could take right away?

Genevieve: I would say something I've been really playing with right now is just being active every single day and, you know, and that can look lots of different ways, you know, depending on where you're at, but just having small little physical goals every day, I find really helps me. I sleep better. My mental state is better. I eat better. Just everything. You know, y digestion is better, my elimination, everything.

So, try to have some kind of activity every day. I try to shoot for 10,000 steps a day. That's something kind of, you know, that I've worked up to, but whatever that would look like for you. But, I think, that's something little that we can do. So, whether it's parking far away when we go grocery shopping or whatever or if it's instead of even driving our car some place, riding a bike or walking or whatever it is, just move your body a little bit more. I think, we can all do that on a daily basis and, I think, it makes a huge impact on how we feel.

Katie: Awesome. And lastly, what is the best resource, beside of course your awesome site, that you've found for health and natural living and that you would like to suggest to others?

Genevieve: I think, to your audience, this is going to sound like a cliché or they're going to be like, "Oh gosh, that's so old school," but I would say the cookbook "Nourishing Traditions." That book changed my life. It is a total paradigm changer. So, that, to me, was kind of the book that started it all in terms of really understanding nutrition, properly prepared foods, balance, natural supplements, good water, you know, nourishing soups.

It really is a phenomenal, phenomenal book for beginners and learning just how to nourish our bodies, and nourish our family, and just live a very healthy life. So, that would be a resource that I think everyone could benefit having in their home.

Katie: Awesome. Genevieve, thank you so much for being on.

Genevieve: Sure.

Katie: It was awesome to talk. Where can everyone find you and find more about you?

Genevieve: Sure. mamanatural.com is our website. We also have a YouTube channel called Mama Natural. We do videos two times a week, every Tuesdays and Thursdays. And, yeah, and then we do blog posts about three times a week, so check us out on the blog. And thank you so much, Katie. It was so fun to be here. It was an honor to just spend this time with you, so thanks again.

Katie: Ditto. I will link to everything you talked about on your site in the show notes for anyone who wants to find those resources. And I believe you also said that there should be some resources at mamanatural.com/wellness where they can find your specific information.

Genevieve: Yes.

Katie: Thank you to everyone for listening. If you have a second, please subscribe to this podcast, if you haven't already, so that you will be notified of future episodes. If you would take a second to leave a review and tell me how awesome Mama Natural was, I would be really appreciative. Until next time, have a healthy week.