Episode 512: Tim Masters on Everything You Need to Know About Mattresses and Health
Child: Welcome to my Mommy’s podcast.

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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 this episode is everything you ever wanted or needed to know about mattresses because it turns out that there's a lot that we don't usually learn or get explained to us. And I am here with Tim Masters, who is a father of five, and the owner of My Green Mattress. And we go deep on all things related to mattresses and sleep, including what things like VOCs are, what terms like GOL and GOT certifications mean when it comes to mattresses, what it means for a mattress to be certified organic, how to know if your mattress is healthy or not, and how to check third party verification. All about flammability testing, and the chemicals that are often added to mattresses. The truth about what actually builds up in your mattress over time and how to avoid it, including why the average mattress can weigh as much as 17 pounds more as it gets older, and a whole lot more.

This was a fascinating conversation. Like I said, Tim owns My Green Mattress, which is one of the organic companies that I recommend, and it's very budget-friendly. Probably the most budget-friendly of the options
that we have in our home. And so, that's why I asked Tim specifically to be on here. But what we talk about applies to really any mattress choice you would make. And there's a lot of education and understanding that will help you make an informed choice about this. And I also delve into why I feel like mattress choice is a big deal when it comes to health. So, lots of directions. I hope that you will enjoy. Let's jump in. Tim, welcome.

Tim: Thank you for having me. Yeah, glad to be here.

Katie: Well, I know we're gonna go deep on essentially everything anyone ever needs to know on mattresses and health today. But before we jump into that, I have a note in my research from you, that you are a volunteer to be basically a shark at a local high school. So they get to kind of have entrepreneurial experience and get their ideas checked. This resonates so deeply with me because we have a thing in our household where our kids have to have a profitable business for a year before they can have a phone or a car. And I think entrepreneurship is an amazing thing to get kids into young, and it teaches them so many life lessons in a hands-on way. So I would just love to hear a little bit about your experience in working with these kids.

Tim: Yeah. It's actually really rewarding, and I feel pretty honored to be asked to be a shark. And it started when my daughter was taking a business class in high school, and she'd asked, or she told her teacher, you know, "Maybe my dad could be a shark." They had a project to come up with their own businesses, it was a full semester project for the kids. And it started there, and now I continue to be a shark with the high school. And it's really neat to see all these young minds bring to light, like all these great ideas, and it's, you know, I don't know, like to help guide them. And sometimes they blow your hair back, you're like, "Wow, I can't believe that, you know, you came up with such a great business plan." From start to finish, they have to show profit in their business, they have to show, you know, what product or service they're gonna provide. And myself and a couple of other small business or medium-sized business owners are sharks, and we give our input at the end of the day, and they get graded on the performance. And they have to come up and, you know, give a nice presentation just like "Shark Tank," it's great.

Katie: That's really cool. I'm hoping we'll see more things like that in a lot of different places as this...I think this new trend is getting...not really a trend, but this is becoming more mainstream known. And like I said, I think you can teach and learn so much through the lens of entrepreneurship. So I love that you're doing that. And that's actually a perfect segue into entrepreneurship in the way that you're doing it, which is through natural and organic mattresses. So I have a lot of pretty detailed questions for you on this. But first, I'd love to hear how you got into this world, to begin with, because that's a pretty specific world, and I know I'm a big fan of your products.

Tim: Yeah. Well, thank you. I started in a local mattress factory, just a really nice, well-run small like factory direct mattress factory back when I was a teenager. And I loved my job. I love building these mattresses. It really seemed, it resonated with me because it was like a win-win. Not only are the mattresses and the products made here, like we tried to do everything like manufacturing. And, you know, we source as many
products and components as we can from right here in the States. And we get to get the end product to the consumer. So it's from, you know, raw goods all the way through the manufacturing to delivering the mattresses to the people's homes. And I don't know, I just always felt that really rewarding. And even the original owner, I had so much respect for him. He was so honest in everything. He was always scratching his head, "What's better, what's better?" We always strived, "How can we improve? How can we make this better? What's a better process?" Like we never just sat back and said, "That's good enough." I loved the company from day one.

And then when I was 24, I'd mentioned to the owner, you know, "I love working at this shop," but I'd finished school, and I was like, "I need to move on." And he said, you know, "If you quit," he goes, he was like, "I can't run it anymore because I'm getting too old because my kids don't have interest in it." It's myself and two other employees working at the time. And he said, "Why don't you stay with me one more year, and I'd like you to buy the business, the building, inventory, and equipment."

So, when I was 25, I gave him one more year, the same pay rate, and when I was 25, I purchased the company. And what was neat about it is that there was actually an apartment above like our showroom which is connected to our factory. And I was able to live. My wife and I were able to live upstairs and run the showroom and the factory. It's kind of an old-fashioned like shopkeeper, and it's just kind of a neat little niche. So, that's how I became a mattress maker.

Katie: That's a cool story. I know when I started researching mattresses when I got into the world of health and wanted to find good options for my kids, as we had more and more kids, I found that there were so many terms and so much information, things I had never even known to research until I started really getting in the weeds of it. And so I'd love to start broad and maybe kind of define some of these things and understand what they mean. And then go deep on health implications and sleep and everything else related to it.

So, to start off, I know one term that gets used a lot when it comes to looking for a healthy mattress is the term VOC. And I would guess most listeners have at least heard of this in either relation to mattresses or paint, or they at least have a passing understanding of what that word is. But for anyone who doesn't, let's just define what VOCs are and how they relate to mattresses.

Tim: Sure. VOC is a volatile organic compounds that are released into the air from whether it be polyurethanes, whether it be from, you know, oil-based products. These are things that we breathe, and they kind of linger in the air, and it's like the smell and the odors that you get from newer products, a lot of synthetic products. VOCs are, unfortunately, all around us, whether they be polyesters or common everyday household, paint, cleaners. It comes from all kinds of stuff. So VOCs are everywhere.
So the VOCs, what can you do to reduce it? So you take a good look at, you know, what is in your home, and what are things that you can control. Like even the air quality in your home can be up to five times worse than even the outside air quality. And people spend about 90% of their time in their home, whether it's learning, playing, sleeping, you know, just hanging out. And it's how do you make that healthier? And one thing that is really nice is like if you do get an organic mattress, you spend so much time, a third of your life is on that bed. And it's we make a mattress with like no VOCs, no off-gassing extremely healthy. It's definitely a benefit.

Katie: Yeah, that was surprising for me to learn, like the new car smell that everyone loves is almost completely VOCs. And like you mentioned, these are in a lot of products that we come in contact with in our house on a daily basis. And this is for me part of the reason I've also delved into the world of personal care, for instance, like many women put so many chemicals on their body in the name of personal care. And that exposure adds up a lot. And like you mentioned, that surprised me early on when I learned that indoor air can actually be, like you said, much worse than outdoor air. And yet we're spending almost all of our time now indoors. And to even like delve deeper into that, we're spending a third of our time sleeping on our mattresses.

And so one thing I've always thought is, anything you can do to passively improve your sleeping experience, without having to actively do anything, is a big health improvement because you're gonna sleep anyway. So if you can optimize that environment, you're changing a third of your exposure potentially, just by making really conscious decisions there. And I know when you start delving into this world and trying to figure out, "Okay. How then do I choose good products and good...? How do I even start in this world?" You also run into things like...terms like GOTS and GOLS. And so I'd love for you to explain kind of the hierarchy of different mattress certifications and what they actually mean.

Tim: Absolutely. Like you mentioned, it's a rabbit hole once you start to look at mattresses and what do all these terms means and what's the benefit for you the consumer. When we have our certifications like whether it be GOLS, which is Global Organic Latex Standards, or GOTS, GOTS, its Global Organic Textile Standards. What this means is that all the materials that are used, whether it be the cotton, the wool, which would be GOTS for textiles or GOLS for the latex. And what that means is that the farms that all these materials are harvested from that they're grown on, they don't have any like growth hormones, or the trees, or the sheep, or pesticides. Those components are extremely important, but what's I think a little bit more important too is what's the percentage of those components.

Like I see a lot of, I don't know how to say it, but like greenwashing, whether it be with mattresses, clothing, there may be a certain percentage of the organic materials. It's important to know like that it's fully organic, or as organic as it can be. So, for instance, like our Global Organic Latex Standards, like once at your GOL certified, that farm that the rubber trees are grown on, it's certified by a third-party, you know, that the crop is, you know, fully organic, there's no growth hormones. That they're not adding any chemicals that are not needed to those crops, for sure.
What sets us apart to think a little bit with My Green Mattress is that it's...we are actually a certified organic mattress factory. And what that means is that we are third-party-inspected, we get audited annually. They come in, they inspect our components, they inspect our inventory, they look at everything that we do. They look at our sales sheets, they look at our purchase orders, and they make sure that what we say is what's in the product, and everything has to match up.

And the beautiful part of being like a certified organic factory is that it's we don't just claim to be organic like it's fact-checked, you know, it's like the real deal. It's full transparency. We're inspected by a company called Control Union, and Control Union is recognized by the USDA. They're recognized by...it's like the highest standard you can get.

So to even go deeper. So Control Union, they have certain processes, like even how you clean your equipment, how you store your equipment or store your inventory. And when those materials come in, whether it be the organic cotton fabric that we use, the organic wool that we are using, or the organic latex, that all comes with the certification number. And they come with lot of numbers. So each package is specifically marked, and we track from each component. All the information on there is actually...ends up on your law label when you get the mattress, whether it be the Emily Crib Mattress, the Natural Escape Mattress, or all Latex Hope Mattress, on the law labels, it is all spelled out. And it is coded to trace back to each component, the day it was ordered, the shipment it came on, the farm that it was certified with, their certification number, and then our certification certificates, all tie back to the information that is on each and every one of our law labels, which is really cool.

Katie: And you mentioned a lot of greenwashing. And I know I've talked about this happening in a lot of different areas of health. Certainly, we see it in food. We see it in all kinds of natural products. And I know it's happening in the mattress industry as well, and you see terms like natural mattress, or clean mattress. And you mentioned organic being an actually defined term. If someone's wanting to kind of cut through the greenwashing, what should they be researching when they're looking for an organic mattress? And how can they know for sure that it's met those stringent qualities that you just talked about?

Tim: Third-party certifications are the best. Like if you are like Control Union is they're the biggest and the best. And I think that all top-tier mattress companies for the organic market will have the Control Union certification number. And you can find that in everybody's website. We are third-party certified through Control Union. We have a certain CU number. CU is just abbreviated for Control Union. That is our number that you can trace back to see when our certification was given, what we're certified on. Every component is inspected and it's put. The third-party certifications from Control Union are the best that you can get.

So some of the materials like some companies will have...we use organic cotton, we use organic latex, but it is not their certification. Like it would be certified, and then they purchase it, and it may or may not be in the end product that you receive as a consumer. Just because it says GOLS or just because it says GOTS, where are those certifications issued? It's important to know that the certifications are issued to the manufacturer who is
making your product. That's key. There is no greenwashing. Once that certification is issued to that company, they have to abide by those standards. So they use those certification immediately.

Katie: Got it. Okay. And I know another thing that is a potential thing to understand that I don't think is talked about as much when it comes to mattresses is the flammability aspect and what's required for it to be flame-retardant to a certain level. And I know, at least from my research a long time ago, this is actually an area where you sometimes see a lot of stuff you would not want to be near your skin added to mattresses because they have to meet certain criteria for not being flammable. And I'm sure you can explain this a lot better than I can. But kind of walk us through maybe what those requirements are when it comes to the flame-retardant ratings or however that's measured, and how you can know if you're getting a natural option related to that.

Tim: Sure. The fire testing or fire standards for mattresses, flammability testing, changed in 2007. And the government had asked that all mattress and furniture companies meet this new flammability requirement where the standard for the flammability used to be, you would have 39 lit cigarettes, and they were issued by the government. You would put 39 lit cigarettes in certain spots on the mattress, and you would bring the mattress to...where they do the testing. I'm drawing a blank. Anyhow, you'd bring it to get tested. And what they would do is they put 39 cigarettes on the mattress, and it couldn't ignite.

And then in 2007, you also had to put the 39 lit cigarettes on the bed. But in addition, they did an open flammability testing. And what that means is basically a torch on the surface of the bed and a torch on the sidewall of the bed. They would keep that torch blowing on the bed for 30 seconds, pull the torches away, and the mattress had to pretty much smolder or put itself out. They would test for heat release on the mattresses. So it's really hard to test without these newer chemicals and the chemicals that they would put in like from fiberglass sacks, to boric acid, to, you know, the different fibers that will go directly under the fabric to kind of smolder the flames. And it's like, "Okay. This can't be good for anybody."

So we looked a little bit deeper and we're like, "Okay, there has to be another way around this. Like I don't wanna be..." And me personally, I don't wanna be making these mattresses for eight hours a day, in the chemicals, and then go home, and sleep on this for eight hours a day. Like I'm like, "I'm not gonna make it to 50." So what we did is a lot of work on how do we pass this with organic or natural fibers?

And wool is beautiful, wool is a natural fire barrier. Even years ago, fireman's coats were made out of wool. And its wool is so awesome to use in a mattress and even for clothing or socks or anything. Wool is a hollow fiber. It distributes heat so well. It wicks away perspiration. It’s the most temperature regulating fiber known. It’s awesome to use in a mattress. So we started to use wool directly under our fabric in our natural and organic mattresses.
I went to enough burns like for the Underwriter Laboratories is what I was trying to think of, the UL Labs. So I went to enough burn tests to where I started experimenting behind my shop, like I would make a mini mattress or get some samples. And I would simulate the tests with some torches in the back of our shop. I'd pull the torches away, and I'd see how it would burn. And I'm like, "I kept failing." And I'm like, "What am I doing wrong?" And this is like the years 2006 and the 2007. And I changed my sewing style, I changed the gram weight of the wool that we would put in, and I passed. And I'm like, you know, "This is working."

So we tested our worst-case scenario, which they would consider, you know, like, what would have the easiest burn rate or what would ignite the most. So we would take those mattresses, and I'd wrap them in wool. I did my new sewing style. We did the new gram weights of wool. And I felt so proud and so happy that I was able to pass this new flammability testing from the Underwriter Laboratories, and did it with all natural products. I'm like, "I got it." So then we're like, "Game on, now we can produce a full-on product line with no fire retardant chemicals in it." And then we evolved from there.

Katie: Yeah, I feel like this is an area that isn't as well known, like I said that mattresses have to pass this test that often that can mean they're using chemicals, but that there are natural options, which is what I was so excited to see in you and what you guys do. And I know that there are other companies that use wool as well.

I also know...one thing I wanna make sure we touch on is that organic mattresses do cost more than certain types of other mattresses, which to me, they're well worth the investment. And I feel like you guys are much more budget-friendly than some of the other brands that I've tried and still have the same quality. But I know this is a big investment for people, and I don't wanna rush over that because I think...like I said in the beginning, I think this is something you're sleeping on for a third of your life, it's worth the investment. But also if you're going to invest in it and view it as an investment, it's something that you wanna take care of. And I know when it comes to longevity of mattresses, there's a lot of factors that come into play here.

You can maybe either dispel or confirm this for me. But I've read that over time, a lot of stuff can actually build up in mattresses, that you can get like sweat and dust and dead skin and all kinds of things in mattresses, and that can actually affect the quality and the longevity of the mattress. So maybe with that as a springboard starting place, let's delve into is that true for one? And two, how do you protect the longevity of your mattress if you're gonna invest in an organic one that might cost more?

Tim: Great question. And it's years ago, so I was a delivery kid with this company, and I would carry out everybody's old mattress. And you know, we carry in the new one. And I was like, "Why are these old mattresses so much heavier?" And, you know, 25 years ago, its mattresses are all made fairly similar for a lot of years. And I asked the original owner, one day we were cutting covers, and I go, you know, "Why are the old mattresses so much heavier?" And he goes, "They are not heavier." And I didn't argue the point or bring it up anymore, but I'm like, "No, they're a lot heavier like carrying them out."
But looking into it a little bit deeper, the average queen-size mattress after 10 years weighs 17 pounds more than it did when it was new from skin cells. Everybody perspires in it about a liter of sweat each night, and then other skin cells, other oils, they go directly into your mattress, and that’s what I was carrying out.

So one way to protect your mattress is actually like a mattress protector, which are really nice. Because one thing I noticed as well is when I would see customers like locally like see them at the grocery store, you know, out and about, people would say, "Love my new mattress. I'm feeling great." And I kept hearing, "I'm feeling better," and I'm like, "It's because you're breathing better." Like you don't have all those dust mites, you don't have all the skin cells, you don't have, you know, everything that kind of builds up into that mattress for so long. And when it's new, you get a fresh start.

But the mattress protectors, our machines...we offer an organic mattress protector, which I love. It's machine washable. It'll collect your skin cells. You know, you could sweat on it, but it's machine washable like you say, and you can put it right back on and get a fresh start, you know every other week, once a month, whatever, you know, your cycle is for washing your protector. But mattress protectors are key to like a healthy bed, and it's to really reduce the amount of dust mites and skin cells and everything else that goes into your bed.

And to go in a little bit on our mattress protector, it is a certified organic mattress protector that we use. It is certified organic cotton. It is two heavy layers of organic cotton. And right in between is a very thin, almost you can't detect it with the eye, it's like a film. And it's a food-grade polyethylene layer that goes through. And what's important about it being food grade is that it being a food grade like barrier, it won't leach. Like food is very particular, like the USDA, you can't wrap, you know, certain vegetables or certain, you know, meat products in just any plastic because it will leach into that product. So our barriers are organic mattress protectors use that same barrier to keep everything out of your bed. And it actually is waterproof, but it doesn't feel crinkly, it doesn't sleep hot. They're really nice.

Katie: And another thing that I think it's important to understand when it comes to mattresses, and there's kind of maybe several points related to this, but there are different types of mattresses, some have springs, and some don't. So I'd love to hear kind of a pros and cons of springs versus no springs. And I know that there's at least a subset of the community that prefers to avoid springs because of the potential that the metal in there can potentially basically amplify EMFs, at least from my research. And I know you guys have options for both of these, but can you maybe give us the overarching pros and cons of springs versus no springs, and then what to look for in each of those?

Tim: Sure. I am a little bit partial to the springs, and the reason that me personally, I like a spring mattress. Our spring system that we use like in our upper-end beds has a five-zone spring system. Mattresses always wear in the hip area, you sit up from the middle, you twist from your hips. The center section, I don't want it to dip. And in our lumbar support area or through the center third of the bed, it's 5% firmer. And it's a little softer in the shoulder area, which I wanna get that pressure off your rotators when you’re sleeping, especially, well, obviously for side sleepers. You don't want too much pressure in your body. I always wanna hold you nice and
straight. I never want you to dip in the bed, but I wanna get that pressure off your joints, and it's very important not to put too much pressure on yourself.

With the all latex mattresses that we offer, like our Hope Latex Mattress is beautiful. It's very supportive, very pressure-relieving, on your hips and shoulders, but there is no lumbar support area in that bed. If you have a lot of lower backaches, that's generally when your hips are dropping and your spine is curving down whether you're lying on your back or your side. So you may wanna consider a hybrid mattress with a spring system. If you don't have like chronic backache or anything like that, the latex bed is a great option in a...actually, I love latex mattresses, but I'm just a little bit more in favor of the hybrids.

But the all-latex beds are beautiful for durability, but latex is so nice, it's extremely durable. In the 1930s, almost all of Europe were latex mattresses. And even in the 1950s, tens of thousands of mattresses were sold through Sears, and the bed just lasted for decades. So latex is a great option. But the only thing, if you do have a lot of lower backaches, you may wanna consider a hybrid with lumbar support. Otherwise the latex bed...the all-latex bed is your great option.

Katie: Do certain ones of those sleep hotter or cooler than the others? Because I know temperature is a big thing when it comes to sleep as well, and I'm a big fan of actually things like Chilipads personally because I sleep better when I'm cool. But I know the type of mattress can seem to make a difference in how warm you are when you sleep.

Tim: Latex is awesome. Latex is an open cell product, and it also has...like when they pour the mold of the latex to shape it when its liquid forms into the latex padding layer, there's like holes in the latex purposely put in there about the size of a number two pencil. And they're spaced about two and a half, three inches apart throughout the latex. So that being an open cell product and also with the airflow is awesome, so like it doesn't sleep hot.

And then I think I mentioned earlier like the wool...the organic cotton cover with the organic wool is beautiful for temperature regulating. Even our local store, when women are...you know, they have hot flashes or men have hot flashes, like they love our natural and organic products because it's so breathable, it's extremely durable, and it's but they don't sleep hot.

But I'd also like to circle back about the coils, like we talked about...like briefly touched on EMFs. I don't know all there is to know about EMFs. But what I do know is that in all latex beds, an EMF is electromagnetic field. And what happens with like a traditional spring system in a mattress, all the coils are laced or tied together. And that spring system acts like a big conductor because all the metal is connected and touching. So you have almost like a large antenna.
So, you know, the Wi-Fi in everybody's homes, you know, the electronics in the kitchen, so microwaves, the Bluetooth, you know, everything that's in everybody's home now, the traditional spring systems can pick up a lot of that, you know, radioactivity. It just acts like an antenna.

But with the hybrid mattresses that we built, they're all individually wrapped coils, so they never touch each other. They're actually in individual sleeves so that the EMF level is diminished almost...I don't wanna say almost to nothing, but it's so minimal compared to a traditional spring system. And then the route, obviously, with no EMFs would be the organic latex mattresses in all latex mattresses.

Katie: And one thing I've done in our house too is just that, with the idea of anything you can do to improve sleep and reduce exposure to things while you're sleeping has ripples in the rest of your life. The same thing comes with, we live in a technological world. In my house, there's Wi-Fi during the day because we're all using it to work and for school, I'm not willing to not have Wi-Fi. However, nobody's using the internet while we're sleeping.

So an easy tip I give people is just put a digital timer on your Wi-Fi and take it down at night, or maybe take it down at dinnertime, so you're actually spending family time in the evening. And that way you're just not being exposed when you're sleeping, and you don't need it anyway. And if you're worried about the EMF potential, then you're removing one of those potential exposure sources so it's not being amplified even if you have coils.

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I’d love to also talk a little bit more about wear and tear and knowing how long we can actually expect a mattress to reasonably last, and what other things we can do to help extend the life of a mattress, whether that be, I know I’ve heard we’re just like rotate them or flip them at different times if we need to clean them. What can we do that extends the life of a mattress?

Tim: Yeah, thank you for the question. You can expect a well-built mattress to last minimum 10 years. Honestly, I shoot for like 14 years, 14-16 on durability and other products that we build. Latex mattresses for those of us that knows latex is extremely durable. But there is some maintenance that you have to do in every bed in your home that slept on for like two months. Like whether it be a guestroom bed, but after two months of use or for like, you know, couples or singles or whoever's in the bed, rotate that mattress from head to foot. It really helps with wear patterns. It's also, you know, pretty healthy to keep rotating it. But even our coiled mattress, the hybrid mattresses, the longevity with our button tufting, the organic latex or organic wool, you'll get more than a decade out of any product that we build, so they're really well-built mattresses.

One thing you can do, if it's possible is to every now and then get your mattress in direct sunlight. Sunlight is awesome. It neutralizes odors. It eliminates dust mites. It's just really healthy if you can get any direct sunlight on your mattress. As far as cleaning them, a light vacuuming, maybe once a year, it's not a bad idea too. But I think one of the things for longevity is rotating.

So I've been making mattresses long enough to see where mattresses used to be all two-sided, you should be able to flip them, you flip them, and also rotate from head to foot. And I used to think that the two-sided mattresses were so much more durable than one-sided mattress. But I really have this figured out like it's I'm a nuts and bolts guy about these beds. And I'm always thinking, "What's better, what's better?"

And the way we're building our one-sided mattresses, I actually see I'm getting more useful life out of that product. Our one-sided beds now have been out about 18 years, and I'm just now seeing some customers come back, who are ready for another one of the one-sided bed. Where the two-sided beds were, you know, actually a little bit more frequently purchased than the one-sided ones. But rotating is very important, vacuum every now and then, if you could ever get your mattress in direct sunlight, super healthy.
Oh, and use a mattress protector. And, yeah, mattress protectors are great. You don't need the ones that zip on that fully encase the bed. The ones that fit like a fitted sheet that protects the whole sleeping surface are really nice. You can do a zip on one, you know, if there's, you know, some people like for seniors, or if they're having any trouble with getting to the bathroom or anything like that. But the mattress protectors, like I say, really help with the longevity of your bed too, and they keep it clean, keep it fresh.

Katie: And it's also, I know growing up, it was always we went to a mattress store and laid on all the mattresses, and then you picked it up, or they delivered it from the store. And now we can order all these things online. And I feel like people are used to ordering everything online. But it seems like some people are a little hesitant to order a mattress online because you can't obviously try it first if you're just ordering from a website. So I'd love to just talk about that like how do you...are there ratings for comfort? How do people know what kind of mattress is gonna work for them when they're ordering online and any tips around that?

Tim: Okay. So that is a great question. And even myself as a mattress maker, I'd be a little bit nervous to order online. What you wanna look for is being honest with yourself, like if you're a stomach, or back sleeper, or side sleeper, you're gonna wanna get a bed that fits your shape well. And your age plays a big role in this as well. Like, if you look at...like when people walk into the showroom, I know what bed is for them. Like within three feet of them walking into the showroom, I'm like, you know, "This is the bed that's gonna fit that person the best." But I look at the width of their shoulders, I look at their hips, I look at their weight, and I also look at their age.

So, when you're looking online on a mattress, if you are a side sleeper, and you have very broad shoulders, you wanna get something actually a little bit plusher to get that pressure off your rotator, or if you are a little bit hippie, you wanna get a mattress to take that pressure off. And if you have a smaller waist, it's actually a hard body type to fit. You wanna get a mattress that's plush enough on the surface to get the pressure off your hip joint and fill in nice by your beltline. But I don't wanna see these people sag in the mattresses too. So it's a little bit of a fine line of getting a bed that's gonna get on great support, but not hold a person's hips high or hips slow or shoulders high or low. Like, be careful of your joints if you're a side sleeper.

Back and stomach sleepers can go...they can go firmer. Back sleepers, I just don't want their midsection to drop. I'm a big fan of the hybrid beds with built-in lumbar support. It'll keep that midsection from dropping. Usually, when we see customers, it's that their lower back is bothering them. And what that tells me is that their hips have dropped, that the mattress is getting softer through the center and just not getting enough support there.

If you're older...I worry about people 50 years or older. A lot of older people were marketed to their whole life, "You need a firm mattress, a firm mattress." No, and especially as you get older, circulation is not the same. Your joints have got some miles on them now. So you wanna make sure you get that pressure off your rotator, make sure you get that pressure off your hip joint. Just be good and supported, but you don't wanna
go too firm, especially if you're a senior, or have any joint pain, go a little bit more on the plusher side. So that's what I know about that.

Katie: I also know when I've ordered from you guys, I was first expecting like a huge mattress-sized box to show up, and what showed up was much, much smaller. So explain that too because I think this is a cool thing that we can do now. And they come in so much more compact packaging than I expected to the point that when I unpacked it all, it was kind of amazing to watch what happened.

Tim: Well, it is kind of amazing, even me like...because I see them like being compressed and rolled. But when they pop out, I was like, "Wow, look at that." At our factory, like we've grown from such a small little shop to being like we're world-class. Like everything that we do, like every piece of equipment that we have, there's none better. And I'm always looking, "Who's the best, who's the best? Who's got something nicer? What can we do better?"

We have a roll-pack machine that's actually made in Wisconsin, and I love this company. In our roll-pack machine, so we take our finished sewn mattress, everything's button tufted, everything's put together, goes on a conveyor belt, we check the sizing, we check for law label, we do our inspections, and then it goes into this roll-pack machine. Like a tamper plate comes down, and it can go up to 20 tons of pressure. So it'll take like this 11-inch thick mattress, squish it down to 1 inches, and it vacuum seals it. It rolls out or comes out, and then it gets rolled and put into a box, and it stays back impact until it gets your home.

It's a really neat process like...I'll tell you, in the beginning, when we first started to roll-packing our mattresses, I destroyed a lot of beds. I was like, "What am I doing wrong?" We've only gotten better, like the stuff that we build to be roll packed is so durable, and especially with the latex and the coils. Everything we use has got the best durability for coming back and not having any issues once it gets roll packed. But the mattress does get pushed down, vacuum sealed, rolled up, put into a box, it's manageable, up to 150 pounds. So like some of these California king mattresses we build would tip the scales at about 147 pounds. But they do have nice grab handles in the box, it's delivered by FedEx Ground, and brought right to your door.

You could bring it to your room. You can lay it out right on your platform bed base right on top of your box spring, whatever sleep base that you...even adjustable bed bases our mattresses work on, you can lay that mattress on there, open the packaging. The mattress comes up to its standard height immediately. And then it's...you can sleep on it the same day. You can go...you don't have to to let it off-gas. You don't need to let it air out. Yeah, so the same night, you can just sleep right on them.

Katie: Awesome. I think we've covered so much ground in a short amount of time today. And as we get close to the end of time, there's a few more questions I would love to ask. The first being, I know we've touched on
a lot of things, but are there any other additional areas that people don't know or understand when it comes to mattresses and sleep?

Tim: Whoo. I would say some things that people should know when it comes to sleep is...I'm gonna say it again, they really need to pay attention to their personal shape. It's very important to look at yourself in the mirror. And if you're real curvy, get a little bit plusher mattress. If you're real thin and linear, you can go with the firmer mattress.

Mattresses now, it drives me crazy, like sometimes people buy by price point. Like we'll have customers that come in and not too far from our store. It's a pretty affluent area. And customers will say, "Why would you recommend this bed? It's not your most expensive. I want your best." And no, the most expensive sometimes isn't the best for you or for your body type. And I think that that's shocking to people sometimes when they...you have to look at your body type and say, "I'm pretty linear, so this is gonna work. You know, a firmer bed is gonna work better for me."

Katie: That was a great answer. And secondly, another question I love to ask is if there's a book or a number of books that have had a profound impact on your life, and if so, what they are, and why?

Tim: There's a book that I really like, and it's Jack Welch. He used to be the CEO of General Electric. It was called the "Jack Welch Way." I liked his leadership style. And there's also a book, a recent book, "Leaders Eat Last." It's kind of the way that I've always like been about my company. I've never done what I do for our mattresses, I've never done it for profit to show big gains or anything like that. I do it to help people. Like I am building a product, that's the best it can be. And in the book, "Leaders Eat Last," it's like even in the military, like the greatest leaders, like all the guys that are in the fields in the trenches, you eat first, you get taken care of. I'll go last. I want you to be the best.

That's kind of my theory whenever I look at our factory. You know, I need to say, "You guys, I want it to be the best for you." And it's, I don't know, like even a lot of our employees have been with me forever. There's one girl who started with me when she was 17, and she's now close to 40. And she has an accounting degree, and she runs our sewing department. And I love this woman. She's so good and just so happy to be there. But I'm so grateful to have her. Even our production manager started as a teenager. He's in his early 30s now. He's fantastic. I treat them as best as I can, and even our customers, like what do they need? What's gonna make life better?

So the books that I like are leadership styles that put people first. Leadership styles that aren't focused on profit, but focused on like an environment, in a culture. I don't know. Life is so short. We're only here for a little while. We're all here to help each other. And it's, why not make it as good as we can? I don't know.
Katie: Those are great recommendations. I'll make sure those are linked in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm. Of course, also, we'll link to all the different mattresses so people can see those. And lastly, is there any parting advice that you would love to leave with everyone listening today?

Tim: Sleep, it's really important. Will a mattress cure any sleeping problem? No, but I think that getting a healthy mattress in your home, even if it's an organic mattress protector, it's a step in the right direction. And you can slowly, you know, build those products in your home that would be chemical-free and no VOCs, no off-gassing, it's really important. And our skin is actually our biggest organ. And when you're sleeping on a mattress, like you perspire at night, but you soak up so much of that of what you're sleeping on.

So, you know, its, mattresses are a huge investment, and it's, you know, takes a long time to save up for them. And definitely, when you can, if you can, look at those mattresses, look at the products in your home that have third-party certifications on them. I think that's really important. Mattresses can always...if you get too firm of a mattress, there are always options for like latex toppers to help cushion like hips and shoulders. There are things you could put on to make it softer. If you do end up with a mattress that's too soft, it's a little tough because there's nothing you can really add to make it firmer.

So leaning a little bit more towards the firmer end of the mattress is not a bad thing to do. It's, yeah, like I said, you can always add latex toppers mattress pads that have a little bit of padding in them. And you can tune that mattress in your body type. And a lot of times those additions to the mattress, it just feels beautiful. It really gets that pressure off your hips and shoulders, and you wake up feeling a lot better in the morning. So that's all I got to say about that.

Katie: Awesome. Well, this has been an enlightening look into all things mattresses, and I've been making notes in the show notes. Those are all for you guys listening at wellnessmama.fm, if you want to springboard into more research on any of the things we've talked about. But Tim, thank you for sharing your story today, for all of the education you've given us and for the work you're doing. We have My Green Mattresses in my house, and we love them, and I'm deeply appreciative.

Tim: Oh, thank you. We appreciate you.

Katie: And thanks as always to all of you guys for listening, for sharing your most valuable resources, your time, your energy, and your attention with us today. We are 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.