



Episode 532: Camila Alves McConaughey on Picky Eating, Importance of Community and Balancing It All

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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. That's my personal care line. And in this episode, I am here with Camila Alves McConaughey, and we talk about everything from her new book which is a really fun, educational book that helps combat picky eating in a fun way, about the importance of community and her community that she runs called Women of Today, and a lot about parenting and how she actually implements these things in her actual home, and how she encourages her kids to really enjoy nutrient-dense foods, and how she encourages them to make healthy food choices without dictating it. We get to go deep on that.

We also talk about mom guilt, and the guidelines they have in their home for technology, how they model things that are important to their family culture to their children, how she maintains keeping motherhood always a priority even when things get most busy. And we talk a lot about the importance of starting conversations early, whether it comes to educating kids about food, about technology, about not

underestimating how capable they are of learning and understanding and helping early on. And she shares a really cool story about how she really internalized that lesson for herself in a really unique place.

And she shares some of her favorites, her favorite book, some advice, and we just go a lot of different directions in this episode. It was such a fun conversation. I really respect the work that she does, especially around the topic of community and how important that is for women and moms especially. And she's very aligned with me and mission-focused on helping other women and realizing just how powerful moms are, and that if we support each other as women and moms, that can make a tremendous difference in society. So lots of different directions in this conversation. I hope that you will enjoy it as much as I did. And without further ado, let's join Camila. Camila, welcome. Thanks so much for being here.

Camila: Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to take this time together.

Katie: I am excited too. I love your mission. I've seen your work all over the internet. But I really appreciate the heart you have for helping other moms and families. And you've done this in so many different ways. We're gonna talk about some of those today. But before we do, I have a note in my show notes that you lived in five different countries by the time you were a teenager. And I would just love to hear a little bit about that. That's so cool.

Camila: Yes. So, I would say it was actually on my late...like, between 19 and early 20s. And, you know, I was doing modeling, and the work took me everywhere in the world. I mean, so many places. So, I lived in Greece, I lived in Italy, I lived in Paris, Israel, I went to Africa. I mean, I was all over the place and I was doing it by myself. And a lot of times people think, "Oh, you know, yeah, but you were modeling and it's all glamorous." And I'm like, "No, not at all. I mean, you know, you show up and they literally give you a map, a per diem, that was not much at all, like, very little, and a metro card, you know, a train card for the week." And they say, "You know, and every day you'd have 20 and sometimes more than that, appointments, go-sees." And they'd just say, "Go." Like, it was no... like, anybody help you navigate. And I mean, you try to do that in Greece with...like, the letters are not even the same as we use. It was quite a journey.

But I don't think I would be the person that I am today if I didn't have that experience, right. Because I came from Brazil, then United States and went to all those places and truly lived and lived like they did. And I think that it really opened up my mind for...in a way that I just would've not, right, if I didn't have those experiences. And I think that a lot of the compassion I have in my heart for all kinds of people, I think also comes from that early-on experience to seeing different people go through all kinds of stuff. And it's really cool now because I still have friends from back then, like, that I'm still friends with today. So, when we go to Greece, I'm seeing friends that we used to party together when we were 20 and now have kids and you know what I mean, like, I have my kids. So, it's a beautiful thing.

Katie: I have not traveled that extensively but I will say the travel I've done especially internationally, you're so right, it gives you this different lens for the world and such a unique cool perspective on other cultures. Did you bring back any, like, cultural food that you love from other places or life lessons that came from other cultures?

Camila: Oh, I think that...look, so many life lessons, so much inspiration or food, it's a lot of, like, how...I mean, I'm heavy Brazilian influence on my cooking. But the, like, the spectrum of spices and seasoning, like, all those things that can, like...being in Turkey at the spice market is, like, I'm like, "I've never seen anything like this. Like, what do you even do with all this stuff?" So, like, having that exposure really helps me with being open to other things.

But I do wanna bring it up, something now, because as we're talking, right, it is a lot of people that, their job, don't take them to a bunch of places internationally. Or they can't afford to or whatever for whatever reasons, right, or have a lot of family, can't travel that much. But what I learned is that once I kind of stopped traveling, living abroad, and, like, I had to stay more in the United States because of the kids, little and all of that, I started traveling more in the United States. And I started learning how diverse the culture is here. And I think that a lot of times people, you know, think, "Oh, to see different cultures, to understand different sides or different foods and all of that you gotta go really far." So, you actually know...like, you know, you can drive to New Orleans and you're gonna see a whole different experience in food and flavors and colors and all of that than you're gonna see in Texas and you can literally just drive there. So, I think that's important point to open up people's minds if they don't travel that much that I think that culture even...like, internally it's really important.

Katie: I'm so glad you said that because the U.S., we do have so much amazing diversity and also that's one thing I love about cooking, especially, I know you have kids as well, cooking with kids is you can get cookbooks from those places, even from the library. And you can, in a sense, like, explore other cultures through cooking together with your kids and learning about it and those different spices and, like, the cool unique flavors of other cultures without ever even leaving your home. Like, I feel like food can take us on such a journey.

Camila: Food can be the opening to so much. Like, we used to do at our household when the kids were little, we used to do...like, you know, we used to pick different countries to make food out of those countries and to teach the kids about that place and we'd just start a conversation. And I'm not talking, like, high level conversation or anything like that. But it would just be like, "You know, well, this is what they eat and this is what they do and that's where it is. And they look this way, and this is why they look this way," or this and that. And you start that conversation and all of a sudden, kids are like...stuff, it's just easy for them to relate to and digest. You go from easiest taco to let's make sushi, whatever you like. Yes, food can be the opening to so much.

Katie: I love that. And I know you have so many projects that you work on and so many things that you juggle, but it also seems like, from what I read of your work, you are very, very intentional in keeping family a focus

and making sure you have, like, family time at home and that you're instilling...that you have this very certain family environment and you're instilling certain values in your kids. So, I'd love to jump in there as knowing you're a busy mom as well. Like, what are some of the ways that you keep family time a focus, especially in today's superfast paced world?

Camila: Yes. You know what? It's challenging, super challenging. And the way that I... I think that everybody should have a list of priorities. And at the end of the day, when you put your head on the pillow, you can go through your pyramid of priorities and go, "Okay, I balanced that out good today." Or, "No, I gotta focus more on that tomorrow." The challenge with that is as moms we always have the guilt. If we're doing anything that's outside of taking care of this, like, you know, if we're not giving enough time to the kids, then we're guilty. If we're not giving enough time to work, then we're guilty. If we're not taking time out with the household...It's all this guilt. I don't need to explain. We all know here.

But I think that for me what I have practiced is I have my priority list. And by the way, that priority changes depending on what's going on in our lives. But my family is always at the top. My family is always at the top. So, I know that as long as I can have peace of mind that my family is okay, the kids are okay, and again, when it's crazy, even if it's, like, the little mini breaks, just like before this. I had 10 minutes and my kids were playing outside and they wanted to show me, you know, some tricks that they were doing. And instead of getting on another email to reply and stuff, I was like, "Okay, you have 10 minutes." I just sat outside. And I'm like, "Okay, I got 10 minutes. Show me the tricks." But they feel like, "Okay, I got that little fix." And I think that if you put...so for me, family is on top and then everything else comes after. And if I feel like I gave enough just to my priority number one, I always find that everything else works out. When I don't give just my priority number one, I feel like everything else kind of gets messy. Because then the troubles that I have are bigger and affect me more. Then all of a sudden, I'm a mess. Then everything else becomes for work or this and that. Then I can't accomplish everything else in the way that I like to or need to. Does that make sense?

Katie: It absolutely does. And I've heard parenting experts refer to that as, like, mind, body, and soul time or that even just a few minutes...like, to your point, 10 or 15 minutes of intentional time with our kids, it helps them refill their cup and have that belonging and significance within the family. And it emotionally does that for us as moms too. And then we feel so much more grounded in everything else we have to get done.

Camila: Yeah. And I do think too that, you know, a lot of times parents do this thing where they're like, "Well, I'm doing this and the kids are doing that. And then when I'm done, then I'll come talk to you or I'll come see you, whatever," which is fine. I'm not judging, but with my kids, when I do that, I see that it doesn't work really well for them. What I've noticed that works really well for them is when they understand what I'm doing, why I'm doing. So, then they don't feel like, "Oh, she's just not giving me attention," or, "She doesn't think I'm important," or anything like that. It's more like, "No, I'm doing the laundry right now because if I don't do that, you're gonna run out of uniforms to go to school and then what are you gonna go to school...and, hey, what about this? I'll put it on the washer, we go play, and then I then go do what I need to do and you put it in the dryer, and then you pull out and fold."

So, like, you start giving them ownerships of being part of your journey and the tasks that you have to do so they have a full understanding of like, "Okay, my mom is doing this because of this and that." Like, you know, today, I had to have meetings of things that have to do with our family, and they wanted to meet to give them attention. It's like, "Guys, I can't because I have to go meet with these people. They're gonna help our family do this, this, this, and that." And they're like, "Oh, okay, got it. We got breakfast. Go." They kind of then wanna help. And then later on, they come, "How did it go?" Like, they wanna know, "How was it?" And then it becomes part of the conversation. So, for me, I'm not saying that's the right way to do, I'm just sharing what has worked for me. How do you do it with everything that you do?

Katie: Very similar. I think you hit a key point that I found with mine as well, that idea of letting them have ownership of part of it or feeling like they're actually contributing to the family as well. And it's not like, "I'm your mom and I'm doing all of these things for you," but, "We're working together as a family toward these things that are good for all of us." And letting them not just be involved in, like, a superficial way where they feel like they're helping, but actually they are contributing too and we're all in this together. I'm big on also...I have six, so it gets overwhelming at times if I was...when they were younger, I would try to do everything for them. And I'm sure you've learned this lesson too of now I won't do anything for them that they're capable of doing themselves because I'm like, "I don't wanna take away from them that ability to feel ownership and autonomy and that they're contributing." And, like, we are a team in this family unit. We're all working together to have this harmonious home. It's not me as the mom doing all of this for everyone.

Camila: It's so important. And I'm so happy that you're sharing that that has worked for your household as well. First of all, I don't even know how you deal with six. I give you so much credit and props. I have no idea how to deal with six. I'm with three and I'm like, "Oh, my gosh." And everybody tells me, "Go for the fourth. Once you have three, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, it's all the same." I'm like, "I don't believe you." I'm like, "I don't believe you." But I'm gonna admit something here to you, as between moms. Like, I was guilty of that, too, of, like, going above and beyond of doing things for the kids. And again, I grew up in Brazil, the culture is different. The Latin culture does have a bit of you take care...anyway, if you're Latin, you know what I'm talking about. And we went on this trip to Cambodia. We were actually even in Thailand on a project and I took the kids to Cambodia by myself. Matthew couldn't come. I was like, "No, I really wanna see this place. I'm going with the kids by myself."

And I got there and I told the guide that was with us, I said, "Listen, I wanna go to an orphanage to try to help some kids but I don't wanna go to the orphanage that everybody else, that all the tourists go that already gets all the help. I wanna go to a place that nobody goes to, that people don't know about, that the locals help." So, we go on this journey to get to this place. And I'm telling you that halfway there, I was like, "Oh, my gosh, this is where everything turns bad." I'm like, "I don't know this guy." I mean, the whole road there, it was all shady. I'm like, "There we go." I'm like, "That's where the stories go from good to bad. It's about to happen here." And I tried to be cool in the car and we finally pull up to this place. And it was a locked gate.

So, at first, I'm like, "There we go." I'm like, "This is not an orphanage. It's a gate with a chain on it and nobody is answering and none of that." And all of a sudden, this kid comes out and then this other kid comes out and then we eventually would go in and what we saw in this place on how the kids were living, going about their lives and actually how they were...actually the person who ran the thing wasn't there. They were just all taking care of each other. You know, just the amount of food, how...they were cooking, they were doing all the stuff and everything that they had, I just was like...after that experience I left and I was like, "I'm not..." I realized to me without...because we're in America, it's a different situation. And again, my Latin culture and I was like, "Oh, my gosh, like, without realizing, I'm doing too much for my kids and I'm not giving them the justice of," as you say, "giving them that pride of the little things, like taking care of the house." Like, we're not...

So, when we came back, I was like, "That's it. Unless I have to really do it for you, I ain't doing it." Like, I went to the extreme. So now they wake up, they do their own breakfast, like, they've learned how to get in the kitchen. Like, they're pretty independent and self-sufficient in a way, but that experience really kinda changed my mind because I wasn't realizing and it kind of opened up my mind. I know it's a wild situation to need to go through to open up your mind but I was in my little box at the time.

Katie: I bet that was a transformative experience for you and for them too. And I think back to ideas of, like, how, as a mom, can I model things, not just tell my kids but how can I model for them our values as a family. And one of those is, like, of course wanting to help other people in any way, like, in need, that we can. And, of course, we can give money to charities, but I wanted with my kids to make it more tangible. And so, at Christmas, we secretly adopt other families and buy them gifts and food and all these things and then go, like, secretly deliver it. And I always just thought that was a super fun project.

But it ends up being the kids' favorite part of Christmas. They look forward to that more than they look forward to getting gifts. And so, I love experiences like that one you talked about because it probably really, like, stuck with your kids. And that's gonna be a thing they remember into adulthood, I'm sure.

Camila: No, it really is. And it was funny because on that trip, right, I told them, I said, "Each one of you has this budget and we're gonna go to the store and we're gonna go buy stuff for..." We did multiple trips to different places that...like, the orphanage and a village, like, places that really need stuff. And we were going to this village and... we went to this school actually. And I gave them a budget to go to the store. And the kids, I mean, they got the regular stuff, but then all of a sudden, they started buying toothbrushes. And I was kind of going like, "Guys, I think they need more books and notebooks and pencils and all those things versus toothbrush." And as I was telling them, I was like, "No, let them go do their process. Like, let them have ownership of this." And I kid you not, the toothbrushes were the biggest hit from everything they got. It was like the kids were fighting over the toothbrushes. And I was like, "See, there we go. I'm not saying anything anymore."

Katie: That's so beautiful. I love that. And I wanna make sure we have time also to talk about...I wanna hear kind of the story behind...you ended up writing a children's book that I'm super excited to get my hands on.

And I wanna hear about the process of how you ended up writing it. And then maybe we'll go granular on how you handle food culture and picky-eating in your own home.

Camila: Yeah, absolutely. So, listen, the book is called "Just Try One Bite". I have it right here. I'm excited. So, I'm gonna show it to you.

Katie: Yay. Oh, it's cute. I love it.

Camila: It is so cute. Yes. And the idea behind the book is that, you know, I just learned so much from having three kids, from doing a business, you know, with Yummy Spoonfuls and other business I've done in terms of just the importance of starting the conversation early with your kids. And I'm not here to tell you, you gotta follow this system or this diet or you gotta be vegan or eat meat or not eat meat. I'm not here to tell you this, guys. Okay? I think that you should do what works for your family. But I am here to tell you that the conversation of how important it is of your child understanding that their relationship with food and what the food does to their body and where it comes from and what is processed food, what is fresh food, how does that affect that all, what is real food, what is a treat, and how that works.

You really start to set up your child to have the good foundation and if you set up a good foundation, most likely, most likely you're setting your child for a lifelong of good habits instead of later on. They're gonna learn this stuff later on anyway, the easy way or the hard way. But then you say afterward they don't have to be struggling. I take by...you know, like, my example. I had no restrictions on sugar growing up. And today at my age the biggest struggle that I have is sugar until today. And I look at my husband that did have the conversation, did understand, had limited amounts and, like, it was understood that it was a treat, not a part of a daily routine. He can have a little bit of dessert and he's like, "I'm good. I'm satisfied. Like, great." I'm like, "How do you do that? Give me some." So, long story short, the book is about creating that conversation, but in a really fun, chill way. Okay? Basically, we're giving the kids the power. It's a reverse role. So, it's cute and very funny.

Katie: I love this for several reasons. One is I think stories are powerful, universally powerful, but especially with kids and story time is such a beautiful time with parents and children to begin with. And then you're helping that become a time of lessons. And I've said for a long time that I think we often underestimate just how smart kids are and how much they can learn from a young age. And it all does go back to those, like, early conversations and not under estimating their ability to understand and not in an ever...I'm very cognizant of not being, like, "Food is bad or food is good." But like, "Let's understand food and let's understand why certain foods have so many vitamins in them and what vitamins do for our body, and how eating these certain things can help our gut, it can help our skin." Like, let them understand it. Don't maybe, like, dictate it from the outside. Give them the foundation to make those great choices, like you said. And I think also what you spoke to about balance and not having maybe the forbidden foods but having the education around it. So how do you navigate that with your kids in your home environment? Is it, like, no treats? Is it, like, you just don't make them often? Do you have a conversation about it and it's their decision? Or how do you handle it?

Camila: Honestly, we go through stages, right. So, when we were setting up the foundation for them, we only did, like, treats, like, Friday. So, Friday night was...like, during the week, we didn't have any sweets unless if it was a birthday party or something like that. That's different. But if it was a regular week, we didn't have any desserts. And Friday night was, like, eat whatever you want kinda night. So, it's pizza night, we're gonna stay up late and what dessert do you want. And in the beginning, they would pick candy. Like, okay, let's go to the store and let's go pick up some candy and they chose the candy they want or whatever it is. And then slowly we transitioned to, "You know what? I know you like candy," but we started learning what was in candy and what the thing....so we'll be like, "Well, if you wanna have a dessert, like, I'm trying to have a real dessert, like, if you're gonna have...like, we're trying to have, like, a cake or the ice-cream with toppings or this. Like, we're trying to have a real, real dessert."

So, we went from getting candy to, "Let's go to a bakery that does stuff from real...like, from scratch, and let's get good stuff." So, we got into that. Then we got into, "Should we make it?" You know what I mean? "Should we make something, like, together and make it fun?" So, it's gone through transitions. And then now that they're older, we don't have that rule of, like, just Fridays. We're a little bit more relaxed with it. But I watch them. So, my daughter just went through a stage of, like, really craving sugar and plus hormone changes and all of that. I'm not gonna go crazy on her. We know how it is before we get our hormone changes. We all go crazy for it too, right? So, I'm watching. I'm like, "Okay, do your thing." But it was starting to get a little more and I was like, "Okay, let's have the conversation." So, when you do this or we have the conversation and even, like, three days ago, actually, she came to me and she was like, "You know, I'm past now that stage. I was really, like, craving...like, I'm past it. Like, I don't feel like..." I was like, "Great. So then let's talk about these other things."

So, I think that we need to respect their stages. That's just again my opinion. Some people go, like, really cold turkey and are really, you know, strict about it, which I appreciate too. I just don't know how to do it for my kids. I know that for my kids, it wouldn't be as healthy relationship for them with their personalities. But some kids are completely fine with not having any of it. So, I think it's just respecting their stages and creating the balance. Like, even in the book, we say, "We're not telling you can't have ice-creams, we're just telling you not every day, just more now and then. And you can still have your donut holes." And I think it's just more the balance. And the balance, a lot of times people think it's 50-50 but it's more like this, do as much good as you can and then have your treats and enjoy it.

Katie: Yeah, and not paint them as a bad thing or think that there's, like, shame or guilt around it. I think that's what, especially for women, can get us in that negative relationship with food and with our bodies is that idea of like, "Oh, food is bad and now if I ate it, I feel guilty." And that's so much worse for us than probably the food was is that, like, inner turmoil of now we feel guilty and bad about ourselves. And I have a teenage daughter as well and I'm learning as I go how to navigate that and how to model it firsthand. And I think a big key, like you said, if you make most of your food at home as a family, that gets you 80% of the way there because you're using whole ingredients and you have that amazing bonding time together and the kids see where their food comes from. With my kids, I've also tried to be really careful about making sure explaining

food is fuel. And so, if we're gonna eat this fuel, how do we get the most nutrients and fuel from the food we're putting in our bodies and not that, like, we're just trying to eat or not eat calories to, like, look a certain way. Especially with girls.

Camila: Oh, my gosh, you're touching such an important point about the calories or how you look. That is such an important point. And to your point, girls, like, you have to be so aware of how you present because they're already surrounded by so much and they hear from their friends, like, about weight, about this and stuff. So, I'm so happy that you practice that with your family. That's a version of what I do too. Even for the boys...my little girl is, like, snacking too much. I don't talk about, "Oh, it's not good because you're gonna gain weight." I just go more into, "It's just not a really good habit to have for later on in your life. So, if you're going to have that habit now, most likely you will have later or you're gonna have to work on it later. So, like, let's work on it now so then you don't have to." You know, because it just messes up with how your body absorbs your meals. And then it messes things up for your gut. So, I never talk about weight or this or that.

For the boys, I'll go into...they're very sporty and they wanna, whatever, have the junk snacks that everybody else is having. I always go, "Well, that's cool. You can have that every so often. But if you're trying to perform, like, if you're gonna go surf and if you're gonna go play soccer and you wanna have that feel that you're talking about, have this because this is gonna give you the power for your kicks and stuff." And I think it's key to find some moms that also think like you do because that gives that support system that they're not just hearing from you, right.

Katie: Yeah. And I love tying it into, like, how can this fuel your body for what you want it to do, not how you want it to look. I learned a hard lesson on that, personally, the last couple of years because I went through a phase where I... actually my daughters were the reason I was able to finally face a lot of my past trauma, which led to losing almost 100 pounds. But I realized even though I was trying to model this so well for my daughter, the last year I kept hearing her, like, not eat enough food and wanting to be...like, wear tiny shoes and be little and small. And I kept going, "Why is she wanting to be so small?" And then I had to realize, "Oh, it's because for the last two years I've been worried about being small." And instead, I'm gonna step into how do I model being strong and fueling my body and modeling like, "Oh, if I eat food that's really nutrient dense, I can go, like, do all these cool, athletic things that feel so good." And so, I've been learning that hard lesson of shifting how I model that which I think is, as moms, so powerful is, like, how we show up is how they learn to show up for themselves.

Camila: Oh, really? What an amazing experience to be able to share with all of us, you know, that you have.

Katie: Oh, thank you.

Camila: It's very powerful. Very, very powerful.

Katie: And I think the other flipside of this is, like, there's, yeah, the foods that maybe aren't that nourishing for our body that we can learn to have a healthy relationship with. I feel like another universal mom hurdle is what to do about helping them learn to like healthy foods because there's all...I hear from every mom ever, you know, they're picky, they won't eat this thing, they refuse to eat this thing. So how do you navigate the pickiness on the good side?

Camila: Persistence. Persistence. You just have to put your foot down sometimes and go, "I'm gonna keep doing it until they get tired of it and they will try it." And guess what? They might not always love it but they'll eat some of it. So, it's very interesting. So, it's scientific thing. So, if you train your palate a certain way...so if you used to eat overprocessed foods, foods with a lot of sugar, a lot of sweets, your palate has developed that taste. So, when you try anything else, it's going to taste bad. So, you can even do a test, okay. Like, if you buy a... I don't know. Like something that is 70% dark chocolate versus milk chocolate, if you try the milk chocolate first, then you try the 70%, It tastes way worse if you do the other way around. You see what I'm saying? Because it's a palate thing. And it takes time to retrain that palate, but eventually it does. Eventually it goes, "Oh, okay, I'm not up here on the sweets or the sours of this. I'm, like, coming down. I'm more balanced that out."

So, I think it's persistence and you have to keep just exposing them to it. Like, I remember my little one went through a stage that he will only eat beans. That's all he'll eat. To the point where I was, like, calling the doctor. Like, it was going long enough, I'm like, "I don't think he's getting all nutrients that he needs." And what I did was I was just going to the color concept, you know, because growing up in Brazil, your plate is very colorful. So, I was like, "You know what? I'm just gonna go to the colors." So I went, you know, you have five colors in your plate, you know, two over here, but three vegetable colors. You have to choose two to eat, you know, and he would choose two. And he would, like, barely take a bite, put it down, whatever.

But I did that long enough, you know, and different ways enough that eventually I remember like it was yesterday, he was sitting on the table, and he grabbed the red bell pepper and he started eating it. And I looked at Matt, I was, like, "Don't say anything. Don't look." I'm like, "Don't move. Let him do it." I'm, like, sign language going, "Don't say anything." And then slowly he's starting to do that. And then we went into a throw up vegetable, which my mother-in-law used to do with Matthew, which they have one vegetable, they're like, "No matter where we are, if we cook it or not, you don't have to eat it." But everything else we put on the plate, you have to at least have a little bit, even if you don't like it. So that kind of also gives them a little bit like, "Okay, I have the power of choosing one that I know I don't have to eat it but then the other ones I..." So, you trade a little deal with them but you have to be persistent. And I know it's a pain. It's not a fun thing. That's for sure.

Katie: Yeah, I like that kind of...and the one bite rule that you talk about of that. And with my kids, I always respect if they actually tell me they're not hungry. I respect if they say they're not hungry. I'm never like, "No, I'm gonna force you to eat even if you're not hungry. But if you tell me you're not hungry, that doesn't mean

you get to go eat another food because you're not hungry. But I made all this nutrient dense food and it was my responsibility to cook it. It's your responsibility to decide if you're hungry enough to eat this food that I've made and you can try one bite of each thing." And I've never forced more than one bite. And same experience as you. I've learned their palates adapt so rapidly, especially as kids and they learn to actually not just tolerate but eventually love those foods, especially when...I think the key you said was they have that ownership of getting to make the choice to choose it. And I love having one food that they never have to choose either, because then they probably still feel, like, sort of in control of their food.

Camila: Yeah. It's like, "So it's my choice. It's my choice." And, you know, another thing too that I did a lot with them when they were smaller and I still do till today is that I'll cook foods or make smoothies and I don't tell them what's in it. And I would do it with something that they told me that they really don't like. So, they say, "I really don't like kale. I can't stand kale," or whatever, right. So then...or beets. And I will make a smoothie with it or a popsicle with it or something that they have that I know they're gonna really enjoy and I go, "It's got kale in it." "No. No way." "It's got beets in it." "You lie." It's like, "How do you think I got that color from?" So, we start the conversation. And then when it's actually in the plate in a different way, they're a bit more open to it.

Katie: I love that. And for you guys listening, I am excited to check out this book too. I'll make sure the link's in the show notes but I know it's available everywhere books are sold as well.

Camila: Yes. You can buy it at Amazon, Target, Barnes & Nobles, at your local store. Like, it's a great book for your kids, cousins, for school, for any organization because it really...it's really cute. I mean, what other book about food that has the kid going to the parent, "In your face mom and dad." Like, it's got that kind of fun to it.

Katie: Yeah, I love it. My oldest son actually wrote a cookbook for kids. And I found that that's, like, the best gift to have on hand is a book for kids. And this is, like, another great one to have on hand of when you get invited to a last-minute party or to gift, like you said, to relatives. It's a great thing to have on hand.

Camila: We need to get that cookbook.

Katie: Oh, we'll send you a copy. It's a fun one. He, like, spearheaded that effort. It was really cute.

Camila: That's amazing.

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Katie: There's so many things I could talk to you about. But another one I think it's really important and I'm guessing you have really valuable perspective on is this idea that when we become moms, that becomes of course our most important job, like we already talked about. And it can feel like kind of all-encompassing sometimes. And I feel like recently there's been all this awareness of how women can sometimes, like, get lost in motherhood. And this...like, the mom guilt, the delicate balance you mentioned of making sure we're always showing up for our families, but also making sure we're still taking care of ourselves. And I know you balance so many projects and work and kids and travel. So, I'd love just to hear if you have any kind of practical tips for other women who are feeling that overwhelm, especially over the last couple of years with how much more moms are handling right now.

Camila: Yeah. I mean, just to talk about it I get chills. Like it's just...to think about everything that we as moms...I mean, just forget about the last few years. Everything that we have to do, everything that we take care of, everything that we...look, if you're a present mom, you put so much of what you want in the backburner. You just do. And then these last few years, it's just been, you know, forget it. So, I think that I don't have all the answers. I'm still struggling like everybody else. But I have learned few things that has helped me along the way. And I still try to always learn more. So, I'm always like, "Hey, if you know something, send it my way, please." But I think that organization, it's a key factor. So, like, in my house, I have, like, a big

schedule. In my office, yeah, I have a big calendar with, like, the next three months. Like, I have one big one for that month and then the next three months.

In my house, I have the next six months in front of me. And everybody has different colors, you know, different colors and it's right there. So, like, everybody in the household can go in, the kids can go in, they can look at it, my husband. It really helps just even the practice of writing on it you're going, "Oh, okay, I have this coming up, that coming up. How can I give myself..." Like, seeing the head of what you're gonna need to ahead of time has helped me tremendously, like, tremendously. I think that, again, if you are a present mom and you wanna do it all, we always feel like we can do it because majority of the times we can. But I've learned that it's okay to ask for help. And it's okay to say, "I need help with this." And it doesn't mean that you fail and it doesn't mean that you don't get it, it just means that at that moment you need a helping hand and it's okay to ask for it.

I also learned that little breaks do wonders. So, like, more than I ever thought. Like, I used to always think, "Oh, I need a whole hour," or, "I need a whole day," or, "I need to go be with my girlfriends." And that's how I get my break. I'm like, "When do you have time for that when you're doing all this stuff?" So, I started taking little breaks, okay. And I would do these breathing exercises when I could and it's very simple. I just sit there and just take deep breaths and do certain breathing exercises. So, Women of Today, we talk about that. If anybody's curious, you can look it up on the website. But little breaks, like, when I come home...let's say if I went to work and I get home, I don't go straight home. I take five minutes in the car. And I just go, "Okay, like, what am I going to next?"

So those little pauses really helps me separate everything that's going on here to everything that's about to happen there. And then it's gonna go over there again. You know what I mean? It's gonna go over here, and... but he's just helps me center. So, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, whatever the time you have to have quiet with yourself, it's extremely important.

Katie: Yeah, and I feel like you're right, it has to be intentional as a mom because if not, all of life's need-to-be-dones will infringe on that time. And then by the end of the day, you've had no time to yourself.

Camila: It just rolls over. It just rolls over. And then you have to have some things that are, like, nonnegotiable. Like, when you're, like, at your point...like, I've had my point in this through this pandemic that I was like, "I'm out." I'm like, "I gotta go." And my husband is looking at me like, "What? Where are you going? What's going on?" I was like, "I need a break. Like, I'm at my breaking point. Like, I need to recharge. I need to fill up my cup so then I can give more." So, I think that as moms a lot of times we feel guilty of saying that and is extremely important. You know, in Brazil, we have this thing we say and I don't know in America, but let me try to translate it here, but it's, like, basically, you can't give properly if you're not in a good place yourself. So, I'm trying more to practice that because I do have a tendency to let my cup super-empty and not verbalize enough when I do need a break, when I do need somebody to jump in and help.

Katie: Yeah, that's a great point. And we can't give what we don't have. And also, it seems like men in general are very responsive. If we actually verbalize what we need, they typically wanna jump in and help make our lives easier. But sometimes we expect them to be mind readers and then we're like, "Why didn't you know that I was..." It's also that balance of like...

Camila: "Don't you see what I'm doing? I'm doing laundry."

Katie: "And then now I'm gonna be angry because you didn't read my mind." And also, like, not getting quite to our breaking point too I feel like is really helpful for me. If I don't wait till it gets that bad, it's much easier to recharge if my battery's not all the way on empty, versus if I'm, like...because I've reached that point too and then you're just...like, the overwhelm hits and then it's...you have to come back from a farther gap. Whereas if we are intentional about building in those moments and another important thing to model for our kids is, like, we don't wanna model for them that you should be self-sacrificial to the point of harming yourself. We wanna model for them, like, how do you love people best, and it's by also taking care of yourself.

Camila: Very true. And I didn't realize that until a girlfriend of mine actually brought that up. And I was like, "You're right. Like, what am I showing my daughter and my boys? Like, okay, they're gonna let their wife run down to empty, they're gonna just watch it and not do anything?" And my daughter, like, you just do it until you can't anymore. And my friend was like, "You know, you're right. You're very right in that point."

Katie: And also, to your point, you're right, moms are amazingly capable and powerful. And I've heard it said, you know, we can do it all but we can't do it all at once. Like, have the systems, have the organization, have this, like, the places in your life to recharge so that you can do the things you need to do, but not all at once.

Camila: And we go through different stages in our lives. And guess what? Sometimes we can. Sometimes we can get all down and great. And then sometimes it's just the stuff is more...whatever it is, then you can. So, I think we need to respect that.

Katie: And I think another key of this that you touched on a little bit is we do need help sometimes and community is so important. Like, we know all the statistics about loneliness is more dangerous than smoking and all the blue zones have very strong community and community is a core part of being human. And of course, that starts in our families. But I think that also is, like, building the support system and the community around you. It doesn't have to be elaborate. You don't have to hire people to help you necessarily, just having community for support. And I know this is part of your reason for Women of Today. So, I wanna talk about that too. Because I do think, like, women especially, we thrive in community and we need that support system. So, for people who aren't familiar, give us an overview of Women of Today and all of the areas it touches. I know it's a lot.

Camila: Yeah, so Women of Today, look, if you go on the website, right there is gonna tell you what we are about. Like, we have a little, you know, our one paragraph that explains what it is. But in a nutshell, it's basically a community-based website where we're learning from each other and is a community of people who want to do better for themselves, better for their households, and better for the community around them, that wants to make change for the better. It started really with this question of...again, living in other countries, even moving when I went to the south of the United States, you know, New Orleans, even here in Texas and other places, I will go in there. And within, like, a matter of days, I already had the support system of people that I didn't even know who they were. Just met them, but they already told me where the school is, what doctor to go to. It was like a very open conversation. And that'll come back to certain place and you'll be very shut down, very close.

So, when we started Women of Today years ago, we weren't having these conversations that we're having today. You see? So, it was a fact of, "Let's create this community where we have a bigger conversation, broader conversation, and that we learn from each other." It's not about me telling you how to do things, it's about me going, "I've done this. It worked for me. What have you done that works for you? And let's share and talk about it together." So that's what the website's about and it covers recipes, wellness, beauty hacks, we get into some deep stuff. We do all kinds of things. We were doing events before the lockdown happened. Throughout the whole lockdown we did a lot, a lot a lot, a lot with people and consistent, very consistent. And that's what the community has shared with us the impact of being present with them consistent has really helped a lot of them with their mental health throughout this whole process. We got some beautiful, beautiful letters, sharing those experiences. So, we try to be as present as we can and have fun at the same time and share some great things.

Katie: And on that note, another thing I'd love to get your take on is I feel like we're the first generation that's having to navigate technology for our kids as they grow up. Like, certainly that didn't exist when I was a kid. My parents didn't have to navigate that. And it seems like you guys were pretty protective and private about your family life and you hold that container very sacred. And I kinda take the same approach of not letting my kids be super visible on social media when they're young just so they have the privacy to kind of be kids and grow up without an external lens on them. But I'd love to hear any guidelines you guys have in your family culture for navigating responsible use of technology because I see the parallels with food, you know. Like, this is the thing that's going to be in their life. We have to teach them how to navigate this well because it's not going away. So how do you guys handle that?

Camila: Look, honestly, we're just learning as we go. We are honestly just learning as we go. We are more strict with them than majority of their friends for multiple reasons. Again, I don't like saying one thing is bad, one thing is good or right or wrong. I think that, again, different families do things differently. And if it works for you, it works for you. Only you know. But for my kids and for the life that we have, we have been more conservative for multiple reasons. And really, like, you know, once they get in there, they're exposed to so much, so much that we just want them to be a bit more prepared and be more wise with what they understand about different worlds before really saying, "Okay, go ahead and go explore," because there's

really no limitations once they get into it. So, we've been trying...so, like, no, they don't have social medias, they don't see...once in a while, we show things to them that they're into on the social media, and we're trying to slowly educate, but they don't have any of that.

I just think the more you can hold off, in my personal opinion, the better because the earlier they start doing...and I've seen it, I've seen it with kids around us, like, they start to become very self-conscious. Like, think of...like, us, as adults, we start doing it and all of a sudden, we start becoming self-conscious, right. So, they start to become very self-conscious about certain things that they really don't have to be self-conscious about at their ages and they start worrying of things. I saw...we had...it's, like, with this little friend, like, she wanted to go to this place. And she was like, "Mom, I really wanna go do this and this and this." I'm like, "Okay." But the whole reason that this kid wanted to go is that it can get a picture with this thing and that thing and that thing and didn't really experience the moment or the time. It was just a matter of, "Oh, no, I need this image so I can put this image out and this image can get numbers." So, it's a video game but it's a... that can really mess with your mind. So, we're very conservative on right now but with education, but showcasing to them what it is, having the conversation. You know, we've watched some documentaries in it. So, we're still giving the education about it, just not the full access to it.

Katie: Yeah, we take a very similar approach and that idea that they have the whole rest of their lives to be on social media, and they're gonna get to learn to navigate that, but also not making it entirely forbidden just like you guys because I don't want it to become the thing that's enticing because it's...only because it's forbidden. And just like with food, having that education around it and helping them understand this as a tool that can be used. Like, the internet's a wonderful tool, you can learn so many things on the internet, and you can use it for school, you can use it for creating businesses.

Camila: Really. And the thing is too, like, you start to learn that they wanna be in on the conversations that their friends are having. So, if all their friends are talking about this thing and they don't know anything about it, they kinda get left out. So that's why I got into, "Well, let's have the education, let's talk about it." And I even said, "If your friends are really into those videos or whatever, just talk to me and maybe I'll go and we'll look at it together. And we'll kind of go through it together instead of going here, check it out on your own phone." Because once they click once, then it's going to the next thing, it's going to the next thing, right.

Katie: Very much so. And as we get closer to the end of our time, a couple questions I love to ask, and I'm excited for your answers too, the first being if there is a book or a number of books that have really profoundly impacted your life, and if so, what they are and why.

Camila: Okay. I don't have a lot of time to read. So, I don't read a lot. And when I do read, it's more, like, scientific books. I know it sounds weird, but I got a little bit of a scientific mind. So, like, right now I'm reading a book on microbiome and it's all the stuff, you know, and research and things like that. So, I would say if I have to pick one, I would say that, just flat out honest, just, like, the Bible because you know, I grew up in a Catholic

household and going to Catholic Church. I mean, I still have guilt from it. So, I think that would be the book that has impacted me the most.

Katie: I can understand exactly what you mean. I grew up very similarly. You've also mentioned a couple times originally coming from Brazil. I'm curious if there's any fun family traditions, or cultural aspects that you've carried into family life with your kids from Brazil, whether it's foods or activities or parts of the culture.

Camila: Yes, so many. Honestly, like, we can talk hours about just that. But I'll say this. One simple one is that I always have a pot of beans in the household. So, we always have a pot of beans on.

Katie: And I think I read somewhere also that you guys sometimes do, like, dance parties in the morning and put on Brazilian music and everybody can dance.

Camila: We do. Yeah.

Katie: I love that.

Camila: We've haven't done it in a while. It's a good reminder.

Katie: I love that. Then lastly, any parting advice for all the women listening today? It could be related to something we've talked about or something entirely unrelated.

Camila: Oh, any advice? That's always a hard one to ask. You know, somebody asked me the other day what advice would you give to your young self, so if you were to tell your kids when they get into their late teens or early 20s. And I think that on that is just to start early. Like, start early. And I think that's a great thing to, like, push your kids on it, too, that if you wanna start a business, if you wanna start a passion, if you wanna start a career, just start early because once you have kids, and you have a family, it's still doable but it's just gonna be more challenging. It's doable. We've done it and many people do it and all of that, but it's just more challenging. And I think that for people that are now, women that are now in our age of, like...I think the reality is that we're in a constant changing world, we're in a constant changing state and it's okay to change. It's okay to change. As long as you change for better, embrace the changes.

Katie: I love that. Wonderful advice and a perfect place to wrap up. Where can people find you and keep learning more? Obviously, they can grab your book anywhere and check out Women of Today. But where can they find you?

Camila: They can also find me on @camilamconaughey on Instagram, on Women of Today, honestly, their website, the emails. I look at all the emails that we get. And, yes, I think those two places are the best places. On Instagram. But if anybody wants to send a direct message, I get an overwhelming amount of those. It's impossible to get through all of them. So, the email on the Women of Today website really is...like, that one we always make sure that we read and go through it.

Katie: Wonderful. I'll put links to all that in the show notes for you guys listening, wellnessmama.fm will have all of those. Thank you so much for your time today. This was such a fun conversation. And I love what you're doing with your kids and your family and the new book.

Camila: Yes, thank you so much for having me. I truly enjoyed it. And congratulations on everything.

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

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