



**Episode 549: Angela Gargano on Strong Feels Good, Getting Your First Pull-Up & What if It All Goes Right?**

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to "The Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie, from [wellnessmama.com](https://wellnessmama.com) and [wellnesse.com](https://wellnesse.com), that is wellness with an e on the end. And I'm here today with someone I met recently and absolutely loved her energy and her just contagious excitement for life. Her name is Angela Gargano and she is an athlete, a coach, an international fitness model, and a speaker. I met her recently at an event, and really connected with her on some of the fitness stuff. And specifically, she does a lot of work helping women to be able to do pull-ups, which is something that has been elusive for me to date, and I'm currently doing her pull-up program to, hopefully, change that.

But she's just a fascinating, inspiring human, and she talks about her journey with strength, with American Ninja Warrior, and now with helping thousands of women get stronger. I love her message. which is that strong feels good. And she really dials it down with some specifics in this episode about how to get kind of the minimum effective dose, how to integrate and get the most benefit quickly from these things in your life without having to spend hours in the gym. In fact, she actually recommends against hours and hours a day of gym time.

She definitely walks the walk and lives this. And she helps many other people do the same, and she gives them really applicable tips for increasing strength and muscle mass in this episode. Such a fun one for me. I know that you'll enjoy it as well. Let's join Angela. Angela, welcome. Thanks so much for being here.

Angela: So, so pumped to be on the podcast today.

Katie: Well, I got to meet you recently and knew immediately I had to have you on this podcast. And we're gonna talk a lot about some fun, fitness stuff. But before we do, I have a note in my show notes that you were a biochemist for three years, and I didn't actually know this. So, talk a little bit about that.

Angela: Yeah, I know a lot of people actually don't know that. I feel like I've lived very many lives someone was telling me the other day. Yeah, I definitely think I have. So, I actually went to school for biological chemistry. That was my main thing at first. And when I graduated, I actually was working at Brown University. And we were studying different compounds to make, to help with prostate cancer. And then I shifted gears, and I started working at this place called Genzyme where I was creating a compound called Fabrazyme for this rare, genetic disorder. So, it was like a hazmat suit-in type of thing. And that was a big part of my life for the longest time was just working in a lab coat and goggles kind of behind-the-scenes which was kind of interesting. And then I realized that I felt like I could create a bigger impact if I was actually more hands-on with people. And not, like, in the lab coat and goggles behind-the-scenes type of thing.

Katie: Did the biochemistry influence your fitness outlook at all or do you think you had a different perspective because of your background in that?

Angela: Yeah, I definitely feel like the biochemistry helped me along the lines of just knowing kind of the right and wrong because there's just a lot of stuff out there. And it's kind of, like, trying to understand there's a lot of things that are just thrown at people right now like supplement-wise or even, you know, workout-wise. And just kind of knowing already the science behind it, and actually looking through the research I think really helped me be more educated on that and also bringing that to the people that I was helping.

Katie: And then you're also my... I have four daughters and they're all fans of you because of the "American Ninja Warrior" side. They're all pole vaulters and athletes and think you're so awesome because of "American Ninja Warrior." But talk a little bit about your journey with that.

Angela: Of course. And also pole vaulters make really good Ninja Warriors. So, they should think about doing it sometime. Yeah, so "American Ninja Warrior." I actually got on that show on accident which is really funny because I was actually really big into fitness competitions at the time. So, that's where you're walking on stage in a bikini. They also had the version of it where you're, like, flipping around on stage. So, I was doing a different type of thing because in college I was a college gymnast. So, I was trying to pitch and find, like, that something else to kind of work on. After a while doing the gymnastic competitions, it was great. I think I learned a lot from it. I kind of was trying to look for the next thing. And someone told me, "Hey, you were great in gymnastics on the bar. You should try "American Ninja Warrior."

So I put an audition video in. Did not think I was gonna get on. I didn't think that I would ever be good enough, or they'd want this little girl from Rhode Island. Like, why are they gonna want me on the show? And then I wound up getting called and they were like, "Yeah, you need to come on and you're going to be on in two weeks." I was, like, "Oh no, I need to figure out how to Ninja." So, I had to go around everywhere and find gyms and find people. And I found an amazing community within Ninja and was actually...so I was on for four seasons which was really, really great. The community's amazing.

On season 10, I actually wound up tearing my ACL on the show which was really traumatic. But it really made me grow and really use what I was doing, you know, on TV to help people. Because I was like, "I'm gonna come back 11 months later. And I'm gonna show people that if they're injured, if something's happening in their life, that they can come back too." So, definitely, a lot that came from "American Ninja Warrior."

Katie: I love that. And it seems like a very recurring theme across the areas of life is those hardest things in life often become your greatest springboards to the greatest things in life. And I love your message around "Strong Feels Good." Because I think for a lot of years there wasn't as much focus on strength for women, and it was all about esthetics. And there seems even still to be so much misinformation about strength in women and getting bulky. And we're gonna talk a lot about that. But, how did that start for you? Because you went from gymnast to biochemist, to now, helping thousands and thousands of women with fitness. So how did that story happen?

Angela: I know, super crazy. It's like, yeah, and I was like, wow, I guess I did lead a bunch of lives. Yeah. So, when I transitioned from fitness competitions to Ninja Warrior...you know, fitness competitions is very, like, you've gotta have that bikini body. They're literally judging you while you're on a stage. Like, that's really a lot of what it's about. And then when I switched to Ninja Warrior, I realized it really wasn't about that. It was about how strong can I get? How strong can I get so I can actually make it through and functionally get through these obstacles? And that's when it all kind of clicked and came together in my head.

It was like, this whole entire time I had been obsessing over the scale. I had been obsessing over my body and what it looks like. When I just focused on getting stronger, my body looked better, even better than it did when I was so focused on the other things. And I wanted to bring that message to other people because I saw that again, the industry that we're in right now is so much about, "Let's have that bikini body. Or, let's lose the weight," and all that stuff like that. And I'm, like, this is so much different. Because when I was the strongest I was for Ninja and even that's how I train right now, I not only look good, I feel good. And that's at the end of the day where you're actually trying to get at, right? You want to feel good. If you look great, and you are miserable, and you're like I'm eating celery to get my six-pack, that's no way to live. That's no way to live. You can have all of that if you're just not focusing on it.

So, I came up with this idea. It actually first started with pull-ups, which I'm sure we'll get into. A lot of females were coming to me since I'm a Ninja Warrior, "I would love to get a pull-up," and that's just a goal they had. So, started working on them with that. And then after the pull-up stuff that I would do with them, they were like, "What's next?" And that's when I created "Strong Feels Good."

And the program is all about getting stronger. We don't allow anybody to weigh themselves. And it's all about let's get you to feel amazing. Stay consistent. Enjoy your life. Eat the cookie. You know, do all the things and just really enjoy your life while you are getting healthier in all sorts of different things. So "Strong Feels Good" kind of came along from all of that.

Katie: And I love it. Because that shift in perspective toward strength, and nourishing the body, and fueling it, ironically, you get to eat so much more. And you have so much more freedom. But also that feeling, that intangible feeling is key. And I think so many women for me, at least, have fallen victim of that kind of diet cycle where you're tired, and you're lethargic, and you're deprived. And you have a bad relationship with food.

For me, personally, my journey was when I was still struggling with Hashimoto's, noticing my daughter see me look at myself in the mirror one day, and see her register that I was looking critically at myself. And it had

probably never occurred to her to look at herself that way. And that was that moment for me of whatever it takes, I'm gonna change this paradigm because I don't want to pass this on.

And then even more recently, I've had a realization where she's now 13. And she was trying to stay really small and she wasn't eating a lot. And she wanted to wear, like, tiny shoes. And it hit me in the face one day of, "Oh, I've been trying to be small for the last two years."

And so, then I got to shift my attitude again. And now, like to your point, it's not about losing the weight which is terrible languaging anyway because no one wants to lose anything. But it's how strong can I get? And the number I care about is how much weight can I pick up off the ground, not what's the number on the scale. And it was a slow shift. But the mental freedom of being in this place is amazing. And there's so many directions we can go with this. But I think to start, let's talk about pull-ups because I don't want to lose time for this. And this one still eludes me. Like, I can lift almost 350 pounds. And I can grip-strength 150 pounds. And I still have trouble with the pull-ups. So, let's talk about women and upper body strength.

Angela: Oh absolutely. And I love that you just said that because I actually just made a video on that not too long ago about how a bunch of my friends are really great at lifting heavy. And when they do jump on the bar, they just can't do it. They're struggling. I'm like, "You are strong. You do have the muscles that work to do this." So, yeah, I feel like pull-ups are...and then I'm sure a lot of people listening on here are probably thinking, "Yeah, that's kinda my goal." So many people I talk to, "What's your goal in the gym?" "You know, I would love to just get a pull-up, just one pull-up." They always say that. And I was like, "Why not?" And they're like, "I just don't think I'm ever gonna be able to do that." It's like you look at that bar and you're, like, "This is impossible. How am I gonna get my entire body to pull my weight up?"

I definitely do feel like women are stronger in their legs most of time. It's so funny because, for me, it's, like, completely opposite. But most females are very strong in their legs. So, they'll do a lot of the leg days and stuff like that. And then upper body I think that a lot of times they probably don't do it as much because it's harder. And then we tend to kind of go towards the things that are a little bit easier, right, when we're in the gym. So, I really wanted to create an experience for people where I would take them through step-by-step. And it wasn't, like, let's just do these four drills you see everywhere online. And let's break it all down. Let's break everything down. Let's go back to the beginning. Like, number one, can you just hang on the bar? Just hang on the bar, get comfortable. Chill out. Hang on it. Move around." And then working on different things like mobility, stability, and strength in order to get it. So, I feel like what happens a lot of times is everybody always wants to go from the bottom to the top. Which it's, like, okay, I get it.

And that's like, anywhere in life, right, you want to skip all the in-between. So we try and celebrate the little ones and celebrate the in-between. Like, why don't you celebrate getting that slight bend in your elbow when you jump up there? That should be exciting for you, right. And then you keep practicing, right. And then when you get a little bit more of the bend in the elbow. Oh, celebrate that. It doesn't have to be about the bottom to the top. The in-between is just as important.

So, we really break down everything in the program so that you're celebrating all those little steps, and all those little wins that you're showing up and doing something that's hard, right. This is hard. This is doing hard things. Once you do accomplish it, which you will, you will accomplish it as long as you stick through, and you stay consistent, everything's gonna change. And it's not gonna just be about the pull-up anymore. It's gonna be like, "Wow, I was able to stick through, get the skill. What else is possible for me in my life?" Or maybe, "I can do two pull-ups now." Or maybe all of a sudden, you're like, "I'm gonna try and, you know, use a

kettlebell. Maybe things change and you're like, "Wow, there's so many things that I didn't realize that I could do."

So, I feel like, I'm just so passionate about it specifically because it's that one thing that especially females are like, "I'm never gonna get it." And breaking it down and again, and changing your mindset into, "It doesn't have to be from the bottom to the top. Let's just show up. Let's get that slight bend in that elbow." It's gonna relate so much to your life that you're gonna be, like, "Wait? What? This whole thing is basically my life's journey in a pull-up, in a skill."

Katie: I love that. And even the baby steps like you said, there's so much cool research. And I've heard from various physical therapists on this podcast that even just hanging for a few minutes a day, it doesn't have to be consecutive. But if you can work up to just hanging for three minutes total per day, that does so much for your shoulder mobility and your posture, and your spine. And that's just hanging. And that's an awesome baby step. Like, I've seen a difference in my shoulders and how I feel just from learning to hang better. But obviously, there's gonna be a progression and every body is different. But how long on average, do you think it's reasonable to expect to go from, "Okay, I can now just hang on a bar, to now I can do a pull-up?"

Angela: Absolutely. And this is a question I always get, it's like, "How long is it gonna take me? How long is it gonna take me to do my pull-up?" Everybody is completely different for sure. But I can tell you with a range. There's a few different things. Number one, how hard are you willing to work? Like, if you really wanted to get your pull-up? When I helped the editor of "Women's Health" get her pull-up and she needed to get it in 14 days. And we were able to get it, right. But that's because I said to her, "How hard are you willing to work? We're not going to be able just only do stuff three days a week. You're gonna need to be at home doing different things as well." And it wasn't just doing pull-ups by the way. Because your pull-up is actually a full-body movement, you're actually using everything. You're using your arms. You're using your core, and you're using your glutes. So, it wasn't like I was making her do pull-ups every single day. But we were doing something that was gonna work towards it to get her to be strong all-around in order to get it.

So, how hard are you willing to work? And you need to be consistent with it. So, you can't just go in there and be, like, "I'm just gonna do a pull-up once a week." That's probably gonna take you...well, then it might take you the year or two. You can't go in there and be, like, "I'm just going to hop on the assisted band." Which, I'm not a huge fan of the assisted band honestly, like, everyone's throwing... Trainers are throwing people on the assisted band. It's a great tool. However, you get very dependent on it. And a lot of times you take the band away and you're, like, "I can't do any of them. I don't understand." So, working really off the band. So, I can tell you that I've seen people literally go from zero hanging on the bar doing nothing in 14 days. Which is why I have a 14-day and a 30-day program. I've seen it happen in 30 days. And I've seen people who, they don't pass the actual 30 days. It might take them, like, 60 days.

Everyone's a little bit different. It's really gonna depend on you, how hard you're willing to work, what else you're doing. So, it's a lot that comes to it. But I can tell you something, as long as you do the drills that you're supposed to be doing, and you show up for it, it will happen. It's going to happen. It's not a matter of if it's gonna happen. It's when is it gonna happen? So, just continue to show up. So, it can't be, like...and if anybody, any trainer ever comes up to you and says, "Oh, you're gonna look like this, or do like this in exactly 14 days, or 30 days," that's not a good trainer saying that right there. But I can say that I have seen some people get to it at those different little points. It's just gonna depend on you.

Katie: And short of an extenuating circumstance or an acute injury, this is a thing you believe all women are capable of doing, absolutely?

Angela: Oh absolutely. I definitely think every woman should get their pull-up and they're so capable. I even had one of my clients, Kim, who I'm obsessed with. She lives in Florida actually. She was 60...I think I got it wrong, it was 60 years old, or 61 years old. And she went from zero to...she was trying to do like three or four pull-ups. And that's another thing showing too, that the age didn't matter also, right. So, it's like, you're not too heavy. You're not too old to get your pull-up. You can get your pull-up at any age. You just have to put the work in and break it down. And then that will, just like anything in life.

Katie: And I'll link to your whole program. But can you walk us through maybe some of the overview of the steps? Because that's interesting. I hear most people do recommend the assisted band. And I found those at least feel good because I'm then getting the motion of getting my face above the bar. But what do you recommend instead? How do you take folks through that progression?

Angela: Yeah, of course. So yeah, we try and stay off the band as much as possible. Again, it's not that it's wrong. It's still a good tool. The thing that happens with the band is it's helping you at the bottom part of the pull-up. That's the hardest part of the pull-up, right? So it's flinging you up at that bottom piece. That's where everyone sucks. So if you're not strengthening the bottom piece, how are you gonna get up? The first little piece is like the most important, right. So, my program, we actually break down the first full week is completely foundational. We're breaking down the foundations. We're teaching you...you know, I tell people there's a lot of stuff going on in your shoulder because there is. I mean, I know you just see a shoulder here, but there is all sorts of stuff happening in here. So first, you want to make sure that you're mobile and stable. So, that's really, really important.

So, the whole first week is, "Let's get you mobile and stable. Let's also increase your core strength. Let's also get you to work those glutes." Because again, the glutes, it's all connected which I think it's super wild. Then I have you doing a lot of hanging for sure. I have you doing a lot of attempts without the band. And again, that's gonna be that attempt where you're not all the way up, but maybe you're getting a slight bend. Or maybe you're getting a shrug in your shoulder. But I make you, in the program as we progress it, go on that bar and I say, "Don't use a band. And try it. Just see where you can go without it." And again, that could be very frustrating for people because they're, like, Uh. Again, the band just makes you feel so good.

So, we also do a ton of again, drills off the band. I also teach you how to use the band properly. Because another issue I see is you use the heaviest, easiest band so you can crank out like 10 pull-ups. You shouldn't be cranking out the 10 pull-ups if you're trying to learn the pull-up. You should be using a band that maybe you can get three. And then on the third one, it's like, you're really working. So you're actually using the muscle. And then I also teach you about actually engaging the lat at the bottom of the pull-up with the band. And that means, like, we call them shoulder shrug pull-ups. So, teaching you how to actually do that engage, so that you can, again, use the band properly.

But the big step here is making sure that again, we start very foundational and then we increase stuff every single week. And little by little, you can start to see the differences there. We also really make sure you're measuring progress. So on day one, we always do a strength test. Which I don't know if you were able to come to the actual class. We did a strength-type of test at the event that I was with you at. And we measure at the beginning and the end so that you can see your progress. Because again, maybe you didn't get all the way up at the end of 14 days or 30 days or whatever, but maybe you can see in the videos that, "Oh wow, I actually got stronger. Look at the development of my back." Like, all sorts of different things. But yeah, with the programming, it's really about progressing it and not just throwing yourself at it. Not just doing the pull-up bands. And making sure you're working your entire body. Because again, it's not just about...the pull-up is not

just your upper body like a lot of people think. There's just so much more. I'm, like, "Oh my god, I don't know how to fully get it."

Katie: And I would guess this also applies to those kind of pull-up training machines that you see in gyms as far as, like, they're actually gonna make you potentially take longer because you're now relying on that additional strength that's not yours?

Angela: Absolutely. I mean the amount of times I've literally heard people be, like, "I haven't got my pull-up. I've been trying for a year." And I'm, like, "Oh, okay. Well, what have you been working on?" "I've been doing the assisted band or the machine." And I'm, like, "Okay, well let's not do that anymore if it's not working. Let's figure out what else we can do in order to finally get you there."

Katie: What about push-ups? Because I can do push-ups but I feel like...and this might be actually just a story in my head versus the true thing. But it feels like, especially working out with guys, it's so much easier for them to just crank out pull-ups. And I know there is an upper-body strength difference in general with men and women. But I also don't feel like that should be a limitation. Is that same curve possible for pull-ups and any tips on those...I mean, push-ups?

Angela: Yeah, same thing. I mean even with...so, when you're doing the pull-up, with the programming we are doing push-ups as well, right, because if you pull, you gotta push. So you gotta make sure that you don't want to get your shoulders all like, rounded. But yeah, the push-up strength is the same exact thing. It's just breaking it down, working on different skills. For the push-up especially, the hardest part is just like the pull-up. It's at the bottom of the push-up, right. So when you're holding at the bottom and your arms are bent, that's the hardest piece of the push-up to get, right? So, you gotta work on that more, right. So, it's like, "Oh." You start to think about these skills and where is the hardest piece? Where do a lot of people get stuck? When you're doing a push-up, hardest part is the bottom. So you should be doing a lot of push-ups and holding at the bottom for two or three seconds and then coming back up. Or just doing some holds and seeing if, you know, in one week you can do 10 seconds. The next week can you do 12 seconds, right? And seeing if you can continue to increase that strength and then the push-ups are really easy.

But yes, I do feel like the guys have it easier upper body. I've had guys run through my course as well. It's for females, but I've had a couple of guys running through it. And they definitely get a lot of pull-ups after it. But yeah, it's not impossible and it's just something that you have to work towards. And also, once you get it which is really cool, once you get the first one, the next couple aren't that hard. They just start to feel like, "Oh, I came in for one. I got two. Oh no, I got five. Like, this is pretty crazy."

Katie: Yeah, it's amazing, it seems like, how much of that is probably actually mental. Like, we probably have the skeletal strength long before we mentally realize we do maybe. And yeah, I feel like...also, I'm glad you mentioned the holding it at the hard part. Because that's the thing I've been playing with in training as well is the hold at the hard part of any given lift. And then seeing when you then cycle back into regular lifts, how much of a difference that makes. And I feel like that's not a thing that's talked about at least in the circles I had been in for a long time. But it's really amazing the difference it makes.

Angela: Oh, it's amazing, yeah. If you start to try and break down, you know, "Where am I stuck? Where am I struggling? Where is the hardest part?" Let's see if we can improve in that area. And again, we keep doing that also in the pull-up program. I'll say, "Okay, cool. You're stuck at the bottom, you've a slight bend in your elbow. Okay, cool. What's the next step for you? How can we get you to get that slight bend and get a little

higher? Let's work on that part. So, you clearly got the first part down. You got the last part down and it would be the middle part you're stuck." So, it's like, really...

And that kind of brings in my biochemistry degree, right? It's all kind of like an experiment. And you're trying to figure out okay, let's problem-solve, and figure out where you're stuck and how we can get you at the next level. I love what you said too about mindset, yes. Pull-ups is such a mindset thing. There's a lot of people who are 100% strong enough, but they are convinced in their head, they can't. And really again, breaking down and celebrating those small wins are super, super important. In my coaching program, we have a whole mindset section actually. My other Ninja Warrior friend, Mita, and she comes in and she just walks everyone through shifting those negative thoughts. And another thing I think about is we don't do a lot of pulling in a normal day, right. We do a lot of pushing maybe. There's a lot of normal day things. Or we squat down, or we grab things. There's a lot of things where other movements, you know, come to fruition in everyday life. But we don't do a lot of pulling.

So, our mind/body connection with our central nervous system, it's not connected. So what that means is, like, there's literally pathways that are created for everything that we do, right. And when you're doing pull-ups since you're not doing it a lot, there's no pathway created. So, you need to give your body some time to create that pathway. And be like, "Oh, you want me to work this muscle that I've never worked before that I didn't even know existed." So, a lot of times again, you could have all the muscles. You could be strong and you're not getting up. It just could be that connection's not there yet. So, there's a ton of other tricks we also go through with that where I'm telling people to tap their lat. It sounds so silly. I'm like, "Tap your lat, do all these other different things." And it actually allows the brain to be like, "Oh okay, cool. I need to create that pathway." So, it's such an internal thing as well which is super interesting.

Katie: Yeah. And that nervous system training and then like the importance of recovery, and sleep, and integrating the new patterns and all that. I feel like especially...I've seen this is in the mom world at least quite a bit or in female communities when it comes to getting stronger. I feel like there's still so much misinformation out there. And you could speak to this much, much better than I could. But I hear women who are resistant to doing strength-based exercises because they don't want to get bulky. Or they don't want to eat enough food because they don't want to get bigger. And it's funny because now that I'm actually trying to get stronger to realize how much effort that actually takes. Like, you're not gonna accidentally pick up a weight and then end up like a bodybuilder. But let's just kind of dispel a little bit of that misinformation regarding women, and strength, and bulkiness.

Angela: Oh absolutely. I mean, yeah, I get this all the time with people. "Is that gonna make me bulky?" and whatever. So, in order to get bulky first of all, you have to eat a lot of food. Like, a lot of food and you have to be lifting like crazy heavy. That is not an easy thing. I actually have had clients come to me who are...you know, because everyone has different body types, right. I had someone who was very, very lean. And they were like, "I want to get muscle. I really want to get it." And it's actually so hard. That's actually harder for me as a trainer to try and help somebody get the muscle and bulk up like, they're trying to do, than it is for me to help them get toned, and work on their strength and stuff like that. That's actually harder.

So, when you're thinking about getting bulky, that means you have to eat a ton, like, a ton, a ton, lots of food. You'll be lifting pretty heavy. We also have to go back to body types. Everyone has different body types also. So, I mean, you have to also just really be...I feel like really accept whatever that body type is that you have because again, everybody is so different.

But if you are thinking about you're gonna get bulky from this kind of stuff, that's definitely...it's not gonna happen. Yeah, I hate when I hear that all the time. And I also want them to come back to their power and their strength. I actually...what's interesting for me is, I actually always had muscle growing up. It was like my body type that I had. And I got made fun of so, so much. So, what's so funny now is I was talking to somebody else on a different podcast the other day. And we were talking about how we grew up muscular and everyone told us how wrong that was, and how we were manly. And like, we didn't look good or whatever. And now I have people who come up to me, like, when I was out at South this weekend, and they were, like, "Your arms. I would love to have your body."

And it's so confusing when in your brain, because you're like, "Wow, as a kid you told me this is not what you want my body to look like." Now people are like, "I like the way your body looks like." So, I always come back to also being, like, really love your body too at every state that it is. Love what you have. Love your uniqueness. I know it's so hard for people because people are always saying things. But really love it at any state on whatever journey that you're on.

Katie: Yeah, I've talked about that, the mindset piece of that before. And when I was trying to work through the Hashimoto's and having trouble losing weight, I had that story in my head of "Oh, if only I was this size, then I would be happier. Then I would love my body." And ironically, it was when I learned to love and accept where I was, that my body caught up to where my mind wanted to be without the struggle. And now I'm, like, you can't punish yourself into the size you want. You can't shame or deprive yourself into being the size and shape you want. You've got to start from that place of love. And then ironically, it gets way more fun to do all the things that are gonna lead to that thing you thought you wanted in the first place.

But it also seems like a lot of women are either undereating or undereating certain nutrients. And this was a thing I didn't notice till I really started tracking. Like, I had been in that diet deprivation mindset for so long. And then when I actually started tracking, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm eating 1,000 to 1,200 calories a day." And that's actually harmful. And I had to consciously learn to almost reverse diet and eat enough. And it seems like a common theme that there's a lot...I think we're making strides in breaking it down. But women especially are afraid to eat enough protein, or afraid to actually nourish their bodies enough. Are you seeing that as well?

Angela: Oh man, yeah. I mean, I get...more people are coming in to me that they're overtraining and undereating, than any... It's so interesting because you would think that people come in and it's completely opposite. Like, they're overeating and they're not working out enough. So, a lot of people are coming in that are completely overtraining. They're doing a ton of cardio. They're doing all this...basically everything they could possibly do and then they're eating like, nothing. And they've taken all the carbs out of there. They're, like, "Can't eat carbs." Carbs scare them. And again, I feel bad because it's not their fault. It's not their fault when they come in to me and they're saying these things. It's just something that's been programmed into everyone's brain because they haven't been educated on things. And that's why I really with the pull-up program, with the workout program, I really believe in educating.

Let me teach you why you're doing what you're doing so that you will understand it. And you can figure out for your body what's gonna work. But yeah, I feel like so many people are not eating enough, it's really hard. And it's hard for them to again, be like, "Oh, I have to eat." Carbs are fine. Carbs are good. You should actually be having that. And when people are very stuck on that 1,200-calorie diet, that was like a big thing for a while with advertising, that is not enough at all especially if you're working out and when you are training. So, I think really trying to come back and be, like, okay, cool. Why are we doing this? Why do we need nutrients? Why does this happen?

Our body needs that to build muscle, right. Muscle burns fat, which is what everybody wants to do. You need to eat. You need to recover. Especially the recovery. The recovery is just as important as your workout, if not more important than the workout. And yeah, it's super interesting for people who be, like, get freaked out about, "Okay, I'm gonna tell you to work out less. And I'm gonna tell you to eat way more. And just trust me."

And I always tell people, "Just trust me. Whatever you've been doing right now, has it been working?" And they'll be like, "No." "Okay, cool. So, why not try something else? Like, what else do you have to lose to try something a little bit different and see what happens? And if that doesn't work, okay cool. Then we'll figure it out." But it's definitely, like, you have to trust. And if it's something you've been doing over and over again that's not working, if you don't feel well, there is definitely some kind of change you need to make.

Katie: And it is such a mindset shift. Like, I didn't even fully...even though I logically understood it and I had read the studies, I didn't fully believe it until I actually saw it play out in my own body. Of like, oh actually not eating enough will keep you from your fitness goals just as much as eating too much if not more so, I would say. And for me, actually consciously eating enough protein and micronutrients was a drastic change. And so now I look at, I don't care about calories in really at all. I'm looking at the most nutrients possible in whatever given volume of food I'm gonna eat. And like, how can I most nourish my body? And that shift from that deprivation mindset to that abundance mindset has been huge.

Angela: Yeah, like what are these things doing for you, right? So you know that carbs are actually gonna be giving you that energy, right. You want that energy. So you need to have that. Knowing that the vegetables are gonna be giving you that fiber which is super important for digestion. And all those different vitamins that are gonna keep you living longer, keeping your skin looking good. All that stuff like that. So yeah, knowing the education of each piece of those like you said, nutrients. That's what I do now. Everyone's, like, "Can you show me what you eat in a day?" Everybody. I feel like I get that all the time. First of all, I'm not going to because everyone's so different. But what I honestly do is I look at my plate and I'm just like, "Oh cool, I've got my protein. I know why I need that. I've got my carb. I know why I need that. I've got some veggies. I've got some good fat, maybe like an avocado or something like that." That's literally what I do. So, people are like, "What do you eat in a day?" I literally just make sure every time I look at my plate, that I have those things because I know what they're going to do for me. I know that they're going to give me that more energy, and that they're working for me.

Katie: And you also mentioned overtraining. I think there's a lot of myths about how much we actually need to move and work out. And I'm a big fan of move all the time. Like, we should be active as humans and moving through our environment. But when it comes to actually working out to get the most benefit this is a thing I think is especially relevant for all the moms listening. Is like, time can be very much a limiting factor. And I think we have this idea that we need to be at the gym maybe for hours a day to achieve what we want. And so I'd love to talk about almost like a minimum effective dose for women of what are those triggers? What are the minimums that we need to do to work into our routine that actually turn on these triggers for maintaining lean muscle which we know improves longevity and reduces all-cause mortality and all the things we want as we get older?

Angela: Yeah, absolutely, again, you have to figure out what's gonna work with your schedule. Because clearly, you could have one trainer come in and be like, "Okay, you need to work out five days a week. Do all this stuff." But if you have, you know, kids, and work, and stuff like that, that is so hard sometimes. So, I think just figuring out a couple of days where you can get some movement in would be really effective with whatever that training is. So, you can really get an awesome workout within 20 minutes. And I've honestly done that. I

teach stuff on "Women's Health" all the time. The classes are not an hour. And my training, myself, is not an hour at all. I get in. I get effective and then I get out.

And I just make sure that I have a little bit of movement, like you said, every single day. And that movement can be maybe go outside and get a walk or something like that. And I feel like that's super important. So you always think that you need to be in the gym for hours and stuff like that. I say if you can at least get two to three days a week in and even just do 20 minutes in the studio three days a week, and do it effectively and split it correctly, you will definitely be able to see all sorts of progress. I also want to say I feel like a lot of people will do a bunch of just random things. I'm a very big advocate for...random workouts do lead to random results. So, for those 20 minutes if you can find something that is gonna be...you really should be doing the same couple of things for three weeks in a row.

So for example, let's say you're working on a Monday for 20 minutes. And I always say to everybody, so let's say chest and triceps, right. You want to do that same chest and triceps 20-minute workout for three weeks. The same exact one. Not changing it but increasing your weights, seeing if you can get through it a little faster. All that stuff is super important. And then maybe the next day is like a leg day, right. And then again, each week you're just trying to see, "Can I increase my weight a little bit?"

So, everybody wants all the fancy, schmancy different stuff all the time. But it's these basic things that if you can do them and do them really well and get them done in, like, 20 minutes, you're gonna see a ton of results and way more than you may think. Yeah, I feel a lot of people are, like, "I just don't have time. I don't know." You can make the time.

And another thing I tell my clients before we even...my own workouts that I give, the "Strong Feels Good" workouts, I'm like, "Hey if you can't make it through the entire workout that I gave you, no problem. You know you have 20 minutes. Set a timer for 20 minutes. Just set a timer for 20 minutes and just see what happens. See where it goes. And when the timer's off you stop. No big deal. But you still then got something in." It's kind of like shifting into that all-or-nothing mindset I feel like which a lot of people have.

Katie: And we'll put things in the show notes for you guys listening. Because you have a lot of workouts that can be done at home. So, if the gym itself is a limiting factor, there's so much you can do in your home environment.

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I've been on a personal journey with lifting heavier weights just because I know how good I feel when I do that. And I'd love to just talk a little bit more about the strength myths when it comes to women. Because I'm lifting relatively heavy, like, over two times my body weight. And I'm definitely getting less bulky, not more bulky. But I just feel like that's such an 80/20. There's such a huge payoff in less time. You don't have to, like, you said, go lift... It would actually be counterproductive to go lift heavy weights for an hour. You can do it in so much less time, and you're getting so much benefit. But just maybe let's just dispel any remaining myths about women shouldn't be lifting weights.

Angela: Oh yeah. I mean, definitely. Especially as a lot of women are becoming menopausal. I have a lot of menopausal women in my "Strong Feels Good" program right now. And yeah, lifting the heavier weights is actually gonna be really beneficial for you. And it's gonna seem a little weird sometimes when you lift heavier. You're obviously gonna have to kind of rest a little longer in between them which is gonna feel a little weird. You're gonna be, like, "Okay, cool. I'm gonna slowly work my way up to my heaviest weight right now." And then the heaviest weight I want you to rest two minutes in between it. And you're, like, "Wait, what? Rest?" And I'm like, "Yes, actually rest." The rest is super important in the middle of this. But yeah, definitely lifting the weights. Going to get the heavier weights.

My programs are all done at home. I've literally been telling everybody now because there's no excuses now. Like, there was a supply shortage for a while. I was, like, "You don't have excuses anymore. You guys can go to Facebook Marketplace. Or you can go online and you can go get the heavier weights now." Like, it's time for you to try and challenge yourself a little bit more. And it doesn't need to seem overwhelming. You don't need to be, like, "Oh, I've got to lift crazy, heavy right now and do all this stuff." Work your way up towards it. But you want to be challenged. Your body wants to feel challenged. If you're just kind of lifting the stuff and just throwing it around again, it's good that you're moving. But, like, it's time for you to maybe go up and increase your weight a little bit.

Katie: Yeah. And I'm glad you brought up the rest aspect as well. Because I think that's the other thing that, it's less common, but it's easier to get in that more is better mindset. And, "I'm just gonna do a bunch more. I'm gonna do them without stopping or whatever." And I know there's science around this that you could explain better than I can. But that break, that two to three minutes is I think that's the sweet spot at least in between heavy lifting sets. And without that you actually don't get as much benefit. Can you explain that?

Angela: Yeah. So, it's actually really important for you to take those rests especially when you're trying to challenge yourself with your weight. Well, main thing honestly is that you're gonna be able to perform that

better. And that you're gonna be able to keep the form, perform better, and stuff like that. I love also, what you said with more isn't better. My coach always told me, "More isn't better. Better is better." And it's so important to know that. Because when I'm seeing people just throw around their body and doing all this crazy stuff, I'm, like, "Let's slow it down. Let's understand what we're working," and things like that. And actually right now, this is...I'm not exactly sure when this podcast is coming out. But I have a core program. That's where a lot of my stuff started. It's "Core Revolution" program. It all goes back to basics and really again, understanding your body. And it only takes maybe 15 to 20 minutes a day or whatever to do it.

But it's just like with the lifting, we are slowing it down. We are understanding each movement. And a lot of that stuff, after, people will come back to me and be, like, "Oh wow, I'm super happy that you explained that to me." Because for me, personally, with Ninja Warrior, I always thought more was better. Because I was throwing my body, flinging myself around the bars, doing all this stuff and doing these big explosive crazy things. And then I tore my ACL not really because of my knee but because I didn't have a strong foundation, and I didn't do those simpler things. I didn't really focus on, you know, again the basics that were really gonna help me become the athlete I wanted to become, or have the body that I wanted. So, just bringing everybody back. And it's like, let's just take it back for a second. I think it's really important.

Katie: And a friend of mine, Naval Ravikant, he talks a lot about the benefits of compounding. And most people understand this in the terms of finances and compound interest and compound investing. But I find this is also really helpful just to have top of mind when it comes to strength and fitness. Because it's, like, over time if you keep the consistency, more is not better in the moment or in the day. But over time you actually...it's easier to stay fit when you're already fit. And it's easier to get stronger when you're already stronger. And those compounding benefits, it's like stair steps. And every time you get a little bit higher up and then it's easier to maintain that as your baseline.

Angela: I think the issue is that people want it all now. They're like, "I want it now, now," and I get that. With everything, we all want it now.

Katie: And another thing in the workouts we did when we were at the event, is you incorporated sprints which I love. Because this is another thing I feel like isn't as common with women. And it's amazing how many benefits there are to sprints without having to do a lot. It's that other, like, more is not better. You don't need to go do a hundred really hard sprints to get the benefit. And at least the studies I've seen, it's actually a pretty small number of sprints at pretty intense effort lead to really amazing results. So talk about sprints. Because this is something all of us can go do, wherever we are.

Angela: Oh yeah. I'm obsessed with sprints. Actually in my "Strong Feels Good" programs I have them, like, especially on month 20 or something, I have them sprinting two times a week no matter what. Yeah, it's not a lie. What I normally do for the sprints personally is I would do a 15-minute sprint. And what I do is I can either find a spot on the track or I find a spot outside. And you really should try and do it outside. You can do it on the treadmill. But I do prefer people to try and go outside so they can really get the full effect of what the sprint is supposed to do for your body.

And we normally sprint for, like, 30 seconds on, as fast as you can. Or maybe you're on the track and you're just sprinting straight as fast as you can. And then you just walk the corner. And you just keep doing that for 15 minutes. Again, you don't even need to do it for 15 minutes. You can do it for 10 minutes or whatever it might be. But what's so good about sprints is you are using your entire body. You're using your arms. You're using your core. You're pushing through your legs. And if you see a sprinter's body in the Olympics and stuff

like that, I mean, they have an amazing...just look at their bodies. They have amazing body musculature everywhere.

And for me, my friends were always, like, you know, "How did you get your legs and your butt to look like they do right now?" And I'm, like, honestly, "I sprinted." It was really just the sprints. Hill sprints. Regular sprints, all stuff like that. And again, I know sprints also can seem very intimidating. So, you may be listening to this and be like, "Oh my goodness, sprints." Just start somewhere. And it doesn't have to be like an all-out sprint. So I always tell my clients they start at 50% in their sprint. "Start at 50% and then each time see if you can go a little bit more. On that last one, go all out and go as fast as you can." But yeah, if you're consistent with those like two days a week, I mean for my body personally, I saw such amazing results. And it's good for everything that you do.

If you're trying to work towards the sprints and you're still having any issues and you're just not sure, another great thing that you can do is step-ups. Step-ups are good for the glute. And they're basically simulating the same exact thing as a sprint. So, get a box or use your couch or something like that. Put your foot on it. Step up. When you drive up, use your arms to come back down. So, I'll have my clients do that if they're really like, "I can't get outside." Or they're like, "I really feel nervous about this," they'll do that instead. And they'll do the same type of thing. They'll be like, 20 seconds or 30 seconds on. They'll take a minute break. And then I have them do it again and repeat.

Katie: That's a great tip. And I loved when I started learning about sprints because they do. It's like they biomechanically turn on a switch which leads to more lean muscle mass without doing a lot of them. And I remember growing up kind of in the culture where everybody was doing, like, 3-mile runs and all these things. And when I learned about sprints, I was, like, "This is awesome." Because I was always like, I don't love running and I really don't love distance running. So then I was, like, "Oh, we can actually do way less of this and get more benefit, I'm 100% in for that."

Angela: Yeah, running's great. Also, it can become addicting in a way which I feel like I've had a lot of clients who just don't want to stop. They're running a lot, lot, lot. And again, if your goal is you've got to do a marathon or whatever, I get it. You're probably gonna have to run a little bit more. But be careful just being like, "I'm just gonna run. I'm just gonna run. I'm just gonna run." Because it does kind of beat away at your body a decent amount if you're doing it a lot. And you'll see this is why you need to pair it with strength training or sprinting and stuff like that. There is a lot that goes into that. But yeah, definitely being careful about just being, like, "I'm just gonna run. I'm just gonna run. I'm just gonna run." Because at the end of the day, you won't see all the results that you want by just doing that.

Katie: Yeah. And especially like you said, if running is the goal, that's one thing. But if the goal is actually like strength and fitness, you can get there with doing a lot less running which to me, was great news. And to your point as well. If you look at a sprinter's body in the Olympics versus a marathoner's body, I'm like if I had to choose, I want the sprinter's body. And also if I can do less to get there, that's awesome. I'm 100% in for that.

Angela: So you can find the fine balances in both, right. And everyone always asks, just like you were saying, you know, "How long...is it gonna help me to get my pull-up? Or cardio. How much cardio should I do?" I get that one all the time. And again, it's gonna depend on you. For me, personally, when I was doing three days a week of steady-state running and then two days of sprints, all my muscle was disappearing. I couldn't hold on to anything. So, for me, okay cool, that was my experiment. I've got to move this around a little bit. I'm gonna take out one or two of those steady-states and move the sprints around, right. So, really noticing that with

your body it's gonna depend on you, and what works best for you and how your body reacts to these things that you're doing.

Katie: So for people who are like, somewhat time constricted, because moms, that's a big hurdle for a lot of us. What would be the optimal...like, if you only have limited time per day, this is the number of times per week? As an example for me, right now, I'm able to do three strength-training workouts per week, and usually two sprints. And then I'll just do gentle movement active recovery stuff in between that. But if time's a limiting factor, what should we focus on in a given week?

Angela: Yeah. I mean, first of all, that's great. Three days a week, two sprints, perfect. I mean, I feel like that's really the ultimate. And plenty of recovery time and stuff like that, yeah. I mean I think even for women, again even getting two days a week in could be totally beneficial. And they can maybe put, you know, two days a week with strength training and then one sprint or something like that. You can normally find 10 or 15 minutes. I mean I know it sounds, like, impossible sometimes to do that. But you can normally kind of maneuver a way to figure out a way to get that in. It might take some time. You might have some trial and error. You might have sometimes when you book it out and it just doesn't work. But yeah, I would try definitely two days a week. And then if you can get that extra sprint in, awesome. You can also do, like, the sprints that same day. Do a quick workout. Get the sprints in. And that will be super beneficial for you.

But honestly, anything will be beneficial, right. If honestly you're a mom right now and say you're coming back and you've done nothing, anything. And that could just be like, your walk. So many people again want all these fancy things and stuff like that when everyone just needs to come back to basics first before they go any fancier, right. If you are not getting enough sleep. If you're not getting some movement in by just walking. And you're not eating food, like, at home and cooking. Those are three things you should start with first before you do anything and trying to go crazy with anything. See if you can do that first.

Katie: That's a great point. Yeah, I feel like there's this tendency to want to jump into the cool, new, shiny bio-hacky things or latest supplement. And it's, like, 80% of it is truly your sleep, your just basic diet. And for me, getting morning sunlight in the morning which helps that whole circadian cycle and makes those things easier. When you get those in, it's also easier to want to work out. Because you have the energy part dialed in.

I've also had guests on here before that have talked about how we think we shape our environment. And that's true. We create what our house looks like. But also our environment shapes us. And so I'm curious for you, any tips on how you use your environment to naturally encourage...like, I see you right now. People are seeing you on video. You're sitting on the floor it looks like. And you're adapting to your environment. But any tips for adapting your environment to be movement-friendly?

Angela: Yeah. I mean, I definitely am a big environment person. My environment super affects me. So, if I'm not in a good environment, I have a hard time doing anything or being motivated. For me, like, my space in my home right now a big piece of it was making sure that it was pretty open. That I had enough openness in here to make sure that I can really breathe. My bedroom is, like, I won't put a TV in there. It's, like, very calm, colors that I can really get myself to kind of shut down, especially with somebody like... I'm sure you're the same way too. My brain's always going. There needs to be a spot where I completely shut down. And yeah, I just kind of made my space very, very inviting, which I didn't really have before. I was living in New York City for a while. I lived in like a closet. And that was, like, anxious in a box. It was how anxious can we get? Let's get as anxious as possible, everything being squished in there. So yeah, if you can really open up your space.

And also making sure that environment-wise, I have on my list...I have a list of things. And you might have this as well. They're my non-negotiables I do each day. And I write them on Instagram because it's for me. And also people are getting inspired and they're figuring out their non-negotiables. And one of them is making sure that I journal. I meditate. I don't look at my phone in the morning. And I, at some point in the day, get outside. Like, you said, sunlight. Some kind of sunlight to be...like, that kind of environmental stuff is gonna do so much for you. And again, you may not see the effects of it right now. But if you are consistent with it, you will notice that you're calmer. That you're better to people. Everyone else around you is happier. Like, it's just the whole thing that comes around with it.

Katie: I love that. And I will make sure I get from you links to all of your courses for people. I will definitely encourage them. But as we get to the end of our time, a few kind of rapid-fire questions I love to ask. The first being, what is for you, personally, your 80/20 when it comes to health? You talked a little bit about your non-negotiables. But what is your 80/20 things that you think provide the most benefit for the least investment in your own life?

Angela: Yeah. I feel like the biggest thing I do is making sure that I have the non-negotiables always done no matter what. That's like a priority. Nobody else is allowed to get in my way with that. Which again, is like the movement. The journaling. The meditating. I use "Headspace" for meditation and I absolutely love it. Like scrolling less and stuff like that. But then also since I am a very structured person, I also allow myself...this is like that 80/20, right. This is, "Let me just make sure that I don't get mad at myself if it doesn't always go my way," right. Maybe I can't wake up and do this whole entire thing in the morning and something gets in the way, and knowing that that's okay. So I think that's also my 80/20 is let me just be okay if it doesn't actually happen. Because the whole idea of this is not to stress me out, right. It's like, okay cool, couldn't do it in the morning because something crazy went on. I'll just do it later in the day. No big deal.

Katie: And then is there a book or a number of books that have had a profound impact on your life? And if so, what are they and why?

Angela: Yeah. So I make it a point to read every single day, I read like five pages, nothing crazy, every day. But man, I've read a ton of different books. One of them I love, "Make your Bed." I thought that was a really good one. Which is literally a commencement speech that are generally given about why it's super important to make your bed in the morning and how that sets up your whole entire life, your success. It's not just about when I was a kid and my mom was like, "Make your bed." And I'm, like, Uh, "No one's coming in my room. Who cares?" And but it's like so more than just that. So I really liked "Make your Bed."

I really liked "The Alchemist." I thought that was a great book. Because that's a story that kind of brings you into life. So, it's not just telling you things. It's like a story that you're reading and you're seeing how it unfolds. Which I thought was really great.

And then probably the one I just read that I really liked is "Stop Acting Like You're Going To Live Forever." That's actually my friend's book. I love reading my friends' books. A lot of them have been writing books lately, I guess. And that one's really cool because it's just like little things that you can do each day to improve. And it's just little, like two-page things that you can read through. And I love that. Because it's like, I don't have to think as much as I'm reading it.

Katie: And then to wrap up, I often ask in the show notes, if you could give a "TED" talk in a week, what would it be about? And your answer that I have written down is, "What if it all goes right?" And I think with our talk about mindset too, this is a perfect place to wrap up. So, talk to us about that.

Angela: Yeah. So, what if it all goes right? Which, I'll just put it in the universe. I want to write a book called that, "What if it All Goes Right?" And that's because these past couple of years I've noticed I've always been thinking in my head, like, what's going wrong? What's gonna go wrong? This isn't gonna work out. That's not gonna happen. And when I was moving to Austin and I was, you know, getting all my things and all this stuff was happening at once, instead of me...I was like, you know, I'm gonna change this. Instead of me thinking, what if this goes wrong, what if it goes right? What if it goes right?

So, I would write out every single day as if it went right. Hey, the move went great. This deal came through. And I wrote it out as if it happened. And I wrote that every single day. And I swear it was a game-changer. And it's also the sense of what if it all goes right, like, those things that are going wrong are actually going right for you. Because they're steering you in the right direction which you may not see right now. So, I think it's just a big picture with that. And that may be you know when I tore my ACL, that could have been like, "Oh, it all went wrong." But it didn't go wrong. It actually all went right. It went exactly where it needed to be for me so that I could be where I am today. So, I definitely think that my TED talk would be on that.

Katie: Well, I do hope you write that book. And we'll have to do another round when you do. But I love your work. I'm so glad we got to meet at the event. I appreciate so much that you're doing for the world. And thank you for your time today.

Angela: Thanks so much for having me.

Katie: And then briefly, where can people find you online? I'll put the links in the show notes. But I know you put out a lot of great, inspirational content as well.

Angela: Yeah, of course. You can find me on Instagram at [angela\\_gargano](#). And you can always message me at any time. And for the podcast, I gave you guys a special link that has all the different things in there. There's a couple of different free things in there. There's a free core program. There is a free pull-up program. And there's a free trial for "Strong Feels Good" if you want to try it. And then all these other programs are listed under it. So, just kind of figure out what's gonna work best for you and you can go through that. But feel free to reach me and message me at any time. Instagram's really the place to go. That's where I normally message everybody.

Katie: Well, thank you so much.

Angela: Of course.

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

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