



Episode 570: Antony Bartlett on Tai Chi, Meal Planning, and Why Food (really) is Love

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to "The Wellness Mama Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com. That's Wellnesse with an E on the end, which is my personal care line. And I'm here today with a long-time personal friend who is also the founder of one of my most used apps on my phone, which is called Real Plans, which saves me so much time in meal planning.

I've talked before about the 80/20 rule, and Real Plans is my 80/20 of meal planning. It saves time and money because I don't waste food. My kids, even my 6-year-old can plan meals. And Antony is one of the co-founders and the software guy behind all of the amazing functionality. We delve into a lot of that today, and we also get a rare glimpse into something that's also very important to him in his life, which is Tai chi. And he starts off talking about this in his journey with Tai chi and how this actually led into work, like what he now does with Real Plans because of the importance of these values that he centers his life around.

We talk about why Tai chi is a moving meditation, how it helps us let go and be present, how these types of movements actually can help with body alignment and so much more, and how this also led into his journey with nutrition and food, and why this is such an important part of his life as well. Antony is always a lot of fun to talk to. Like I said, he's been a long-term friend for me, and I'm so glad that you guys get to listen in to this conversation with a personal friend and co-founder of something that has made my life much easier. So, without further ado, let's join Antony Bartlett. Antony, welcome. I'm so excited you're here.

Antony: Thank you for having me on your podcast, Katie, again.

Katie: Well, I'm excited to chat with you again. And I feel like while I've become friends with many of my podcast guests after having them on the show, there aren't very many that I get to say I've been long-term friends with, long before there was any business or podcast reason to connect about anything. And I know we

get to see each other in person relatively often and hopefully more often, very soon. And I've had even your kids at my house recently for their lifeguard training this summer. So, I'm excited to get to have a personal public conversation with you about things that are very, very important to both of us. And so, yeah. How are you today? Welcome.

Antony: I am doing great. Thank you very much. Our lives are rather entwined, are they not? Kids at your house. I'm hot right now. I'm up in Oregon. We're moving down near to you, in Florida, in a few weeks. And we're just presiding over a big old heatwave again with the... You know, most of the country is just stupidly hot right now. And we're just, you know, staying cool and eating watermelon. Do you know that the dogs like watermelon rind?

Katie: I didn't know that. Good to know.

Antony: I know. Our dog-loving neighbors said, "Oh, yeah, don't waste that rind, just give it to the dogs." And they love it, they treat it like a bone. And it cools them down in the heat as well, which is pretty cool.

Katie: That's great to know. Super useful tip. And when I say we're personal friends, we met years ago, actually at a Weston A. Price Conference. And I feel like you were one of my friends that when you meet someone and you just know there's an immediate friendship, that's kind of already there. And you just finally met each other, that was kind of the feeling with you. And I know, we got to have some kind of deep personal conversations that very first time that we met. And one of the things that I found out about you, as soon as I met you, was about your love for Tai Chi. And that's now something that you've introduced me too, and I've gotten to start integrating into my life. So, I think that'd be a great jumping-in point. And we can start broad there. So, maybe introduce our listeners to the concept of Tai Chi and how you got into it.

Antony: Yeah. I'd love to. I think I might share the story if I remember correctly that I shared with you when we first met sitting...we were just randomly put together to sit down, right, in the Weston Price thing, and we got talking, it was a good conversation. Tai Chi is something that I came across when I wasn't in a good place. You know, I was in my late 20s, early 30s, I had every privilege, everything coming to me. Never had to deal with much stuff in my life at all, which I'm extremely grateful for. But then my parents got divorced, and it just affected me really badly because I had no resilience because I'd never had to deal with anything really bad in my childhood, was a bit of bullying here and now, and what have you, but that's just normal stuff, but it really hit me hard.

And I knew myself to be a good person, a kind of someone who could think through things and work stuff out for myself. And yet, I just couldn't stop being miserable. I had really low energy. I was sitting around in bed too long, and saying things to myself that, you know, "I was a bad person because I couldn't figure things out." And it was a challenge. And so I tried all kinds of things. I did normally some exercise, did this, did that, went for some therapy, did all these different things. And nothing quite hit the mark. And then I went to a Tai Chi lesson. And I was, you know, 20 minutes into it with a bunch of adults sitting in a room, standing in a room and we're all moving our arms around like this. And we reached back to reach this ball of Chi, I'm like, "What's Chi? This is silly." And I bring it around to the front and have tears in my eyes.

Now, I'm in a room full of strangers, with 20 adults, and I don't wanna be crying. But it really got to me the fact that this weird movement was affecting me so much. So, I got into it, and I dug really deep into it for six months, I was like, "This is weird, and magical, and awesome." You know, because you are working with energy and moving stuff around. I was a corporate dude, and I had nothing to do with this world, whatsoever. And my teacher, Master Z, Nzazi Malonga, he kept at it and teaching, and I kept doing it. And after six months,

I was doing a movement called Golden Eagle Spreads Wings to Embrace Child. Sounds crazy, right? But you reach your hands out and you imagine that you've got like a kid running towards you, and you hug the kid. And then you let the kid go completely so that you might love again, and you hug him. And that was the movement.

After about five or six times of doing this, I had this crazy vision. Now, I've never done kind of acid or any of those hallucinogenic type drugs, but it was as real as it could possibly be. I was like, "I was in it." And it felt like bloody states. Do you remember that old game, KerPlunk, where you had the plastic tube and you had the straws coming in, the balls coming down? It was like that. It was like these crazy "Game of Thrones" type swords coming out of my body, as I went down, and then it was like open my hands. This flock of white doves just came out of me, boom, and flew in all directions. And it happened multiple times. So, I was racked with emotion during this experience. And I was told to keep...you know, just keep going. And after class, I'm sitting there, and I just felt lighter. I just felt like all this veil of tears and stuff, or whatever was going on, just lifted off me. And that was it. I just wanted to learn more and understand more about it.

So, this is a very old martial art called Tai Chi Chuan, which means the grand ultimate best, or the grand ultimate means kind of the universe. And contained inside of Tai Chi is this wonderful observation of nature and balance. And the more that you learn Tai Chi, the more that you learn about balance and how, when things push in one direction, if you are sensitive enough, and in the moment enough to understand that it's going in that direction, you know to pull in the other one, in order to come back to the center. As this wonderful phrase that I was taught, was part of my Tai Chi practice, which is, "The master wields his sword through adversity and doubt, never leaving the center of the universe." I love that. The adversity and doubt, never, and you don't leave the center of the universe. And so you have this, if you are really happy, it calms you down a bit. And if you're really sad, it lifts you up a bit. And so through the study of Tai Chi, after about three or four years, which is pretty early in my career, my teacher said to me, "You're gonna be a good teacher. You need to start teaching." And so I got on with it. And every Monday night, I taught it at school for 15 years, whilst doing my day job, and deepened my study of Tai Chi. And it's been wonderful, and opened so many doors to me in this life.

Katie: I love that story. And I think, hopefully, most people have at least heard of Tai Chi, but it might be a new experience for a lot of people listening. And when I tried it, I loved that it integrates what feels like almost meditation and that calming that you talked about with movement. And for me, that's really helpful. I've never been the kind of person who can easily just meditate and think of nothing, which I've since learned is not actually the goal of meditation. But I feel like Tai Chi is wonderful because you have that, the movement. And like you said, the movement of energy, and it does seem to kind of trigger those inner emotions and reach parts of us through that combination of kind of, I guess, I call it movement and contemplation, but is that what's sort of happening during Tai Chi?

Antony: Yeah, it's a moving meditation. And each of the moves have some...they have three aspects to them. So one, there's a poetry to it. So, this is one movement. See if I can show you here. What I'm doing, for those of you who are listening and driving in your car, I've got a ball between my two hands almost and an imaginary beach ball. And I let go of this hand, like this. And I hold onto this, and I let it go, like that. It's called Grasping Sparrow's Tail. And so, there are three aspects to learning each move in Tai Chi. First is the philosophical. Secondly is the medicinal. And the third is the martial. So, you know, there's a punch coming towards you, you hit him in the neck, it's the martial. The medicinal, it's rooted in Chinese medicine and acupuncture. And so you have six meridians running through your arms and you're opening up your arms. You're giving yourself an acupuncture treatment, which is basically just the balance of the body.

So, Chinese medicine is saying you have too much of one thing, and not enough of another. So, a lot of us have too much energy in our shoulders because we're wandering around, and it's kind of super stressful. And then we have not enough energy in our bellies, and that's why we wander around with pot bellies because we don't have enough in the middle of our body connecting the top and the bottom. But the first one is the poetry. I dig on the poetry. I love it. Grasping Sparrow's Tail is explaining this bird that you've got in your hand. And as you let it go, you are pluming its tail feathers, as you let it go. And so, you are letting go of something and loving it at the same time. And that's to me, so profound, it's this, you can't just let go of something. You know, it's difficult to give up smoking back in the day. I found it really hard. And it's the acknowledgment that you love smoking, but you've still gotta let it go, that gives it balance. Or through grief, the acknowledgment that you love something. And so just in that one move, you have this entire universe that opens up for you. And has led to me being able to teach and help people, like you and all kinds of other people, with balance and understanding balance in a way that people haven't understood before.

Katie: Yeah. I think that concept of letting go, it's been an important part of my journey over the last few years as well. And that idea you've rated lots of different forms and from lots of different people, but that kind of what we resist, resist. And I feel like Tai Chi's a great very tangible way to feel and process that act of letting go. And I think the point you made is so, so important about, especially if there's grief or there's, what we would classify as negative emotions, that process can feel really, really hard. And yet, there's so much freedom and beauty on the other side, and also in the process, and in the grief, and in all of those layers. And for many people, especially, for me, I know firsthand, Tai Chi was such a cool tangible way to get to...I feel like processing some of those emotions. And many of the people listening, since I shared my trauma journey in the past, and I talked about the somatic aspect of processing. For a long time, I ignored my body and thought I could just mentally process and process in therapy. And it wasn't until I got back in touch with my body, that I actually was able to move through that and to let go. And so I love that Tai Chi is a tangible way that I'm sure many people turn to for things like that, to be able to learn to kind of reintegrate and move that energy and let go even through our bodies.

Antony: Yeah. And the access to that sometimes is not what people think. You know, there's so many lessons to learn from Tai Chi, like, do one thing at a time, stay in this moment so that you can make any adjustments. I think the biggest gift that I've had from Tai Chi is just being in my own skin. I've spent so much of my life wanting to be what I think other people want me to be, seeking approval, wanting to rake over the past and think about, "Oh, I could have done that better. And if only I hadn't done that." Or thinking about the future and what's gonna happen if this... There's no room left for sitting down and being here and being present. And so, that has helped me be a better person all around in all of the different aspects in life. And I'm super grateful for that.

Katie: Yeah. Having experienced it with you, I can absolutely see how Tai Chi would be so helpful in that. And I used the quote myself before in learning this process, that when I had to learn that process of being back in my own body and that self-acceptance and self-love, I read the quote, "I said to my body, I want to be your friend. And it took a deep breath and responded, I've been waiting my whole life for this." And I think practices like Tai Chi help us to take that first step into, like you said, acceptance and knowing who we are. And perhaps that question of who am I is maybe the most difficult to answer in our lifetime.

Antony: Yeah. And I think it's difficult because a lot of people don't have the right environment or education, even to be able to have a chance at understanding what it feels like to have good energy or to have a good sleep and what have you. And just shifting the conversation slightly, that's why I've had such a huge journey with food in my life and nutrition. And that, you know, also, a Chinese doctor, the first question they ask is,

"So what do you eat?" That's the first thing because that's the biggest impact that you have on your life. Yes, there's exercise as well, but it's all about food. And so my very clever ex-wife, Emily Montes, she took me through some amazing nutritional advice and understanding about myself.

I used to live in England and came to America. And I lived on toast, marmalade, pastries, just sugar to sugar. I'd been on Oxford Street and exhausted from shopping, and then want to find a bakery in order to get a sugar fix in order to continue my afternoon because I was just so awful, no energy, well, little energy, and then crash, little energy and then crash. And I didn't understand what that could transform into. And so we started getting into the Weston Price stuff, where you and I met. And there's loads of information on your website about Weston Price, and don't have to go into that. But he was the doctor, who figured out that there are certain rules that people could follow with their diet that would bring them much better health. And because he was a dentist, he found that dental decay was happening from people who were following a standard American diet.

So, anyway, the Weston Price thing was amazing. And I started feeling so much better, eating this kind of food and stuff, fermenting food, and started...you know, basically just eating food that didn't have a label on it. So, anything that you could actually name, as opposed to, you know, E4, hydrochloride, whatever it was, you know, stuff that was really basic to understand, like carrot, or an apple, or what have you. And since then, the conversation with me and how I've managed myself, my body, it hasn't been easy. It hasn't meant that I haven't stopped eating, you know...we just bought butter biscuits or Tony's chocolate, tea chocolate. You know that one? I'm not a sponsor, but that's the best chocolate in the store right now. And I wanted to figure out how we could do more, we could do better. And we started this meal planning business, which fell right into the middle of what... My personal journey and what I wanted to do was to help people have sovereignty over themselves and their food, and to help them cook because you don't know what goes on in a restaurant and what food they're giving you.

And also if you don't know how to cook, you aren't able to really take control of what happens. And yet, cooking can be quite a pain. You know, there's the fetching of the food, there's the washing up, there's the this, there's the that, but you can do it quite efficiently. So, that's why my day job is the company Real Plans that you have all your recipes in. And that ties in beautifully with the Tai Chi, because what it's also doing is trying to give people sovereignty over themselves and a feeling of control. I think when you eat really good food, when you really eat a delicious meal, your body almost vibrates, you know what I mean? It goes, "Thank you." And then you don't feel hugely tired. You kind of get up, and you go, "All right. What's next? I am now fueled. Food is fuel." But I didn't do that. I used to sit in front of my screen, eat sandwiches, and it made me tired. Then I used to eat M&M's to make me feel less tired.

Katie: Yeah. I think the food was obviously a big part of my journey, as well as a lot of people listening may already know. But like you said, we met at the Weston A. Price Conference. And in hindsight, it's silly to look back and think that like you in high school, college, and when I was younger, I didn't ever connect the dots that food mattered anything beyond calories and taste. And I also went through those sugar crashes, especially in college. And I joked that, in hindsight, I figured out the perfect recipe for autoimmune disease, which is just be really, really stressed out, eat crappy food, and don't sleep enough. And if you get all three of those right, you have a really good shot at autoimmune disease. But unlearning that and learning how to eat really nourishing food was a big part of my healing journey as well.

And to your point, the barrier there is that often real food does take a little bit more effort or at least a little bit more thought or planning. It's not as fast as going through a drive-through. But also, like you said so well, the rewards are so amazing. And especially when you're doing it, as a mom in a family setting, when you're

cooking and preparing food with your kids, like, we know all this amazing data about passing those skills on to our kids, having dinners with our children, having that time together. And it being such a good predictor of so many things, far beyond just food and health, but even mental health and long-term relationship with our kids, not to mention giving them the skill of being able to prepare their own food, that they're going to do one day, hopefully, as adults in their own life.

And I'm glad you brought up Real Plans because pre-Real Plans, I was doing my meal planning kind of in a PDF system every week and spending a lot of time making shopping lists and doing all the organization, which certainly works. And it does save a ton of time when you kind of batch meal plan like that. But I was doing it, what I now realize having Real Plans on my phone this slow way. And when you guys came up with Real Plans, I was so excited to put my recipes in because, I would say, it's one of the biggest time savers in my life. Like, I use a couple of those shopping apps, and I love that they keep a tally of "You saved 273 hours by not shopping." But I feel like Real Plans even would go beyond that because it's helping you with 80% of that mental work of meal planning. So, for anyone who's not familiar, kind of walk us through Real Plans because if you haven't used it before, it is a game changer. But I know there's so many features beyond, even what I can explain. So, tell us why it's so amazing and time-saving.

Antony: Oh, we spent years on the software, trying to just make it super efficient. And it basically is that you can put in whatever diet you like. And by diet, I mean, what food do you eat in your house? So, it could be stuff that you can't eat, but also stuff you won't eat. So, a lot of America now, you're gluten-free because of the silly wheat that we grow now with Monsanto, all that. But you're gluten-free, but you also don't dig on asparagus and salmon. So you can say, I'm a gluten-free, salmon-less, asparagus-less person. And then we'll either put some recipes on a calendar for you, if you want more prescriptive meal plan, or you can just go from a selection of recipes and put it into a kind of a simple meal planner. And that creates a shopping list. It's really straightforward. And then you go into your kitchen, and you shop your kitchen. Do I have paprika? Yes. Do I have salt? Yes. And you can turn certain ingredients off, like, you know, every week instead asking you for salts, you can say, I always have salts. You don't have to have that in your shopping list.

And then you go to the shops with your cell phone. And as you go around the shop, you check it off and you then have a basket full of food that you're actually gonna eat and are actually gonna go into meals. And then you come back home, pull up the app. And if you don't know the recipe, you get a nice reminder of how to cook it. And that's it. So, we're not a food delivery service. I personally think that...I've tried various food delivery services. There's a lot of packaging, you are getting a very precise amount of food. But I love the leftover part. And leftovers is a huge part of Real Plans too. You can say, "I want, you know, to feed eight with those chickens," so you need two roast chickens. Guess what? If you want to have eight people and some leftovers. So, it allows you to do this simple process of cooking. But cooking expands out to figuring out and designing what you're gonna eat. And you could just like, have the same favorite recipes week after week, because most of us are creatures of habit. And then just try a few new things. And you can also sign up for people's recipes.

So with you, you can sign up for all of Wellness Mama recipes. Or if you're doing the whole 30, you can do the whole 30 using Real Plans. And it just guides you through this process. And it's changed people's lives, Katie. You know, the testimonials we get are so awesome. Pretty my two favorite, is one is this lady who said, "I'm now able to nurture my family in the way that I always imagined romantically, I'd be able to nourish them." So, she couldn't...just was finding not buying the right foods or whatever. And Real Plans only has, you know, this kind of nutritious good food for you to eat. And the other one was this older lady, quite early on in our

evolution. And she said, "I was in a bit of a cooking rut, and I would just cook for myself. But now the food out of Real Plans is so good that now I invite all my friends around. And now they all have my cooking too."

Katie: I love that. I know for me, personally, it's such a time, and I would say, money saver because it's reduced food waste because everything is so planned and I have exactly what I need in the house. And also, to your point, it lets you add in extras and leftovers, which we both have teenagers. And I am constantly amazed by how much teenagers can eat. So, I often find myself just increasing quantity on certain things, because I know they're gonna eat double.

Antony: Yeah, we manage all of those different things. And I love that. It helps people on multiple levels. I've always thought of the way that we are wanting Real Plans to be received out there in the world is that it's an act of love on our part to do this, we want to help people feel better within themselves. And I came up with this phrase years ago, which is just "Food is Love," like, there's a logo, which is like a little bowl on my hat right now. For the drivers, right now I'm wearing a hat with Food is Love on there, and a bowl with some hearts coming out, which is our logo. And I think of food is love on, you know, three different levels. The first level is sovereignty and love for yourself. What standard do you set for yourself on the energy you want for the day, which is what food really is, it's energy. What do you want to get done today? How do you want to be in the world and support your children? I mean, when I was doing a whole bunch of sugar and all of this stuff, I was grumpy and short-tempered, and all of these things, and that's how I end up showing up in the world.

And so, I think that that's one of the great things is that you set a standard for yourself, or this is how I wanna eat. Then because you're cooking, inevitably, obviously the people that live on their own, but there's a lot of family units and households out there where you are feeding other people. So, the standard that you have now set for yourself is now set by virtue of that for everyone around you and your loved ones. So now you are saying to them, "Hey, I want you to have a good day too." And then if you think a bit, on even greater level, on a third level, if loads of households all have that standard, standard for themselves on the kind of food that they have based on, you know, food availability, economics, and all of those different things, which are things that you can plug into Real Plans, then you are changing the world because there are so many households all together who are voting with that dollar for a specific type of food. Does that make sense?

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I think a lot of people listening are moms. And I think that they're getting the kids involved and being able to pass that on to our kids is an important point for a lot of the moms listening. And one thing I love about Real Plans is because the system is so good at getting all the details right, I can let even my younger kids be very involved in picking recipes. And because all the recipes in Real Plans are already in line with what we would eat, they can literally meal plan for the week at age 6. Like, my youngest can do it by herself. And it creates a shopping list, and she gets to feel so excited and so much ownership for having really actually done something helpful to the family. And then she's way more excited to help me cook the meals because she helped plan them. And it really does help your kids get involved, and it's got...

Antony: She's involved.

Katie: Exactly. And all those systems are there. So you're still getting really solid meal plans. They're not missing ingredients at the store. And they're not just making grilled cheese for every meal, they're actually getting to pick from really nutrient-dense recipes, which, as we talked about earlier, the more... I've shifted a lot recently to thinking of not just calories or macros, like we were talking about earlier, but the nutrient density per food, which is very much along the lines of Weston A. Price and a lot of the various methods people listening might follow. And I think that makes a huge difference, especially for kids. When we're talking about the bioavailability of the nutrients in the food, the density of nutrients in the foods we're eating, and

because of the system it's built on, Real Plans, it's already optimized for those nutrient-dense foods. So, kids can go in and pick things based on what looks really good, and what they love. And they're still getting really nutrient-dense options at every single meal. But I know my kids are also very big Real Plans fans for that reason. And we actually keep the app running on the small iPad in the living room, so the kids can be involved when they think of something they want, they go start adding it to the meal plan.

Antony: Ooh, you just touched on a big subject now, nutrient density. There's all kinds of stuff on the internet. And I don't wanna be an echo chamber, talking about all this, but that whole...you know, you need to eat 10 oranges today to get the same nutrients that an orange had, you know, pre-chemical farming and all that kind of stuff. It's kind of crazy what's going on right now with the denutritionalization of our food with all the chemical.

You know, I did touch... I think you had him on your podcast, Zach Bush, Dr. Zach Bush? Right. He's amazing. And we met through mutual friends, and we ended up doing Tai Chi sessions together. And he got a lot out of it, and learned stuff about himself, as all people do, which is interesting for someone who's so self-aware and is so wanting to heal the planet and help everyone else out. But I started following his studies on what's going on. And we knew that anyway, from the Weston Price and Monsanto, who's now Bayer, and their spreading of Roundup all over the country. And again, your podcast has covered this multiple times, but this water-soluble antibiotic, basically pesticide, that just goes into the air and the water. And the crazy statistics we have in this country now about, you know, it was like 40 years ago, 3% of people, you know, had autoimmune diseases and all this kind of stuff. And now, 43% of our children are born with asthma and attention deficit disorder. And, I mean, it's crazy what's going on right now.

And as a parent, I'm wanting to protect my children from exposure, from this kind of chemical-farmed food. And yet, it gets increasingly more difficult because, in order to source of food, you can't just go to the main normal grocery store, you have to either speak to a organic farmer or you're going to a farmer's market. And it's often more expensive. But the alternative to that is paying massive medical bills and having to live a life where you are constantly on the back foot, as opposed to getting in front of it. And I know that you and I are such advocates of this. And so, I think that the big warning sign of everything is not only is it important to eat food with ingredients you can pronounce, and ultimately will just be delicious just by the very nature of it being natural, but it also is important to figure out where you are sourcing more food from.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I had recently Chris Kresser on the podcast as well. And he was also talking about the declining nutrient density of foods, and he mentioned some of those statistics. And he even said, we might be now at the point where it no longer is possible to get into optimal ranges of nutrients without some form of supplementation. But he also said that, if anything that makes diet also even more important because even if you're taking supplements, you're getting those particular nutrients kind of an isolation. And food has all this cascade of nutrients in the right balance. And so he echoed very much, food is foundational. You can't out supplement a bad diet, you might need supplements as well. But he said, you know, food has become even more important than it has ever been. And I think that's another reason in favor of eating at home because, like you said, in restaurants, you don't know necessarily often or always the sourcing of that food, what it's come in contact with, certainly not its nutrient density. So, anytime we're able to grow our own food or obtain it locally, or at least buy organically and know what we're actually eating, and cooking at home is absolutely the best way to do that.

Antony: Yeah. Taking control of your food is so important. And, I mean, when you grow your own vegetables, like, when you grow a tomato, and in the middle of the morning, with the morning sun coming up, and the sun is warming up those tomatoes, and you pull one off the bush and eat it straight away. There's nothing like it.

There's nothing like it. It's so amazing. I wonder how we could encourage people to grow more of their own food again, if they've had some land or just a garden where... You know, I keep seeing on YouTube, all of these rebel gardeners changing the front lawns on people's houses into amazing food forest, and gardens, and stuff, and growing all of that food. I think there's a guy, I'm trying to remember his name, the one who's in Florida doing it as well. But there's such an abundance, nature wants to come out and feed us. The world wants to give us food, and yet, we spend all this time spraying it with literal poisons for a financial gain for just a small number of people.

And I think I find this topic very overwhelming. I don't know about you. I have this setting on my iPhone, where I turn off all the news channels, I'm able to turn off all news, because I'll find myself cycling through BBC, CNN, Fox, Guardian, you know, kind of trying to get a balanced view of what's going on in the world. And you just end up going, "Oh my gosh, climate change. Oh, my gosh, autism on the rise. Oh my gosh, Ukraine. Oh my gosh..." And it just goes on and on and on. And it's so overwhelming. And I keep finding ways for myself to deal with it. And one of them is, for me, Tai Chi is the practice or some form of meditation, but it's just slowing down and just going, "All right. Ooh, I'm here. All seven octillion atoms that make me up, that's 7 and 27 zeros. Isn't that crazy? Right here, and I'm breathing right now. This is kind of cool. And I'm on a planet that's turning a 1,000 miles an hour, and that's, like, you know, 95 million miles away from a nuclear reactor that we are just at the right distance from that. And then that is twisting around with the Milky Way, every 250 million years, like, twisting around. And all of this is heading towards Andromeda right now."

And when you put it in that context, I go, "Okay, I'm good. I'm existing right now in this tiny guitar pick of atmosphere. And I've got food in my belly, and I've got a roof over my head. We're okay." And that's how I start that one. And then I think about the people around me. And, you know, something my Tai Chi teacher told me once he said, "You don't wanna be the guy who goes around just going, well, look what I'm up to. It's helped me, it'll help you too." No one wants that. And no one wants to hear that. But you just be the thing, you just be good energy, you just be happy. And that just changes the people around you. I mean, if you smile at the Uber driver, the Uber driver smiles back, and that starts the whole transaction for your journey with them. And so, that's how you change things I think around you, your children understand you and are watching you and are learning and know more about you than anyone else. And they're watching you go through horrific difficulties and stuff in your life, but they're learning, they're watching the whole time. And by finding something within yourself like gratitude, and love, it bounces off that community around you.

And finally, how do you deal with global issues? You know, you're not gonna go into politics. Well, most of us aren't. So, how are you gonna change legislation? I mean, there are things you can do. You can sign up for things like...you know, Zach Bush has his petition against glyphosate, the Roundup thing on his Instagram right now, @zachbushmd, I think. But I find that it all starts with yourself, and figuring out how to make yourself feel better. And because of the things that I've learned, because of education, because of learning about food, and because of this amazing martial arts, I've learned to just have a little less baggage through the day. Now, it doesn't mean I don't get stressed out and don't get grumpy, but my ability to cope with it, my coping mechanisms are just a little better than they were before in my life. And if any of this is useful to someone else, then wonderful.

Katie: Yeah. Such an important point. Because at the end of the day, all we really have autonomy and ability to change is ourselves. And like you, I learned to shut off the news, not in a way of living in the sand, but realizing as humans, we're so wired for connection and love wanting to help other people. And our brains are still wired for that. And when we see all of the suffering and all of the negative things happening all over the whole

world, we get in that sympathetic nervous system state, because we do wanna make it better. And we can't, unfortunately, fix all of the global problems all by ourselves, just simply by knowing about them.

And I love your hierarchy of that. I've kind of followed a similar one of, you know, how do you change things? Can a small thing create ripples that change big things? If I'm gonna start with myself, which is all I can control, start there. And then, hopefully, I can have a positive impact on my immediate family through things, like we've talked about, through food, through being in my own body and accepting myself and modeling that for my kids, through the connection and relationship within a family. And then, beyond there, how can I personally impact my local community and create change, whether it be helping make sure the environment is better, helping create better opportunities in whatever area possible? And then from there, those ripples then can reach the world.

And I am very grateful. I get to, like you, reach the world in an online way as well and to create those positive ripples. But I think that's a very wise point is we're not only the less stressed, but probably also most effective when we start with, and go back to ourselves and create change there and then let those ripples affect those that we interact with on various levels.

Antony: And now, because we're actual friends, you know, personal long-term friends, it's kind of interesting to talk a little bit about our experience, you know, with this being entrepreneurs in the space and trying to help out. Do you remember what happened when we did the push hands thing together, the Tai Chi push hands where you have two people together? And what you found out?

Katie: Yep, that I was getting myself out of the way. And I was basically...you could explain this better than I can probably.

Antony: Well, we were doing this thing called push hands. And it's where you have placed your wrist in front of someone else's wrist, it's like two-man Tai Chi, basically. And it is also called sensing hands. And the idea is, is that you push a little bit, and you yield a little bit. And as you do it, you sense the other person. And so, in China, before certain big business deals, they have a little concrete square outside the office, and they go and do sensing hands, and again, check out what's going on. So, there are so many things to learn from this simple thing of yielding, and pushing, and loads of lessons. And what we found with you, right, Katie, was that as you yield and then you push, and we discovered that you push, and you push, and you keep pushing, and you keep pushing, and at no point is that a stop. And now it's time to yield and come back again. And it's often the energy of the entrepreneur, to go out and push and work silly hours, you know, you give up a 40-hour day job to go and work for yourself for 60 hours kind of thing. But it's because you have so much motivation and belief in what you're doing and what you're trying to do to heal the world, in your own way, and by bringing forth your talents, probably the best energy that all of us, or our entrepreneurial group can learn from is just being able to know when it's okay to just back off again and to let someone else cook your meal, you know, have someone else take the reins for a little bit.

Katie: Yeah. Circling all the way back to the beginning of so many important life lessons that Tai Chi helps us to see. Yeah, that and many lessons have come from Tai Chi with you.

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And I wanna make sure... I know it's a little bit of a deviation back to an earlier topic, but two other points I forgot to mention on the Real Plans front, that I think were very relevant to families that have been very helpful to me personally, are that you can pick recipes that are easy to cook and budget-friendly, but that also, I wanted to highlight that the recipes are simple. I know we talked about kids being able to get involved, but I just wanted to make sure and explain these are not like Cordon Bleu, you have to have gone to cooking school to make these recipes. They're extremely easy to understand. They're written in very concise complete terms. You don't have any questions or having tough parts figuring out. And it's not like "Here's 90 ingredients that you need to make this sauce." But yet, the flavors are amazing. So, they're very much kid-approved. And I know most of the people listening are moms. So, I wanted to make sure we highlighted that as well.

Antony: Yeah, totally. And if you sign up for Katie's version of Real Plans, which include a ton of her recipes that you find on her website, they're already in Real Plans for you. And everything's all lined up and ready go, and you can even just filter on Katie's recipes and just have hers. And what's wonderful about your food, Katie, is that it really is a real-life version of how we eat. You have the ability to take just a few ingredients and turn it into something delicious and nutritious. And we often cycle your recipes through our household because they're just straightforward and no-nonsense. And so, yeah. So, you benefit from all of that work that we did of importing and making sure that all the ingredients line up the same, and all that kind of stuff. It's really good. I love your recipes.

Katie: Oh, thank you. And on that note, also, you guys have the recipe importer, which I think also makes things even easier. So, if someone listening has family recipes that they love, personal recipes, or websites where they're already getting a lot of their recipes, they can import the recipes into their own personal Real Plans. So, they can use those recipes in their shopping list and in their planning, which is a huge time saver for me as well. Because, like I said, I used to do this whole thing with the printing the recipes and the index cards, and trying to tally all the ingredients by hand. And it does that literally in a second.

Antony: And an important part of that is that when you import that recipe, it's just for you. So, there's no kind of copyright issues or any weird issues like that of then us aggrandizing ourselves with other people's recipes, it's importing a recipe and no one can see other than you. And it just simply adds it, you can make it a favorite and whatever. And it just acts like everything else. Yeah. We've spent years figuring this thing out, trying to understand, what is it that people need, you know, with software development? You come out with an idea of what you think everyone needs, and then people swiftly tell you, "Fear quite harsh complaint sometimes, this

sucks. I can't believe you haven't done this." And so you iterate, and you keep getting better, and keep getting better, and keep getting better until you are able to match what people's expectations are when they think of an app that's gonna help them with cooking. And that's been kind of a great journey for us.

And now, what we are trying to understand is how to encourage and reach more people, and encourage them just to cook. You know, it's de facto that the app is great. We're trying to compete on functionality. You know, there's lots of great software developers out there. Now, it's about getting a message to people about how to take control of your own nutrition, and your own energy and your family's energy so that you are all up for a hike. You're all up for being nice to one another and doing things, family activities, or what have you. But if everyone's just in a sugar-crashy situation, you just get whiny, wired family members. And it doesn't end well, I know that.

Katie: Yeah, I've said before that, for moms, especially, a lot of the stress and the overwhelm comes, not actually from the getting things done but the mental energy of keeping track of all the things that need to get done at all times and all the variables that moms manage in their heads. And so, I love that Real Plans is like having a recipe box, like, a physical recipe box, because it's all there in the app, but it's also like having a full-time assistant, who is helping organize and plan and tell you what to shop for and remind you what's there. So, it takes the mental bandwidth away from that. So, you can actually just enjoy the food part. And I think it also solves the mom problem.

I know a lot of moms who know that sugar's not great for their kids and who know that our kids need to eat nutrient-dense foods. And we get stuck in the shoulds. And then we feel the mom's guilt of all the things we should be doing. And this makes that process easier because they're delicious, which is, I feel like absolute barrier of entry for kids. It's gotta taste good, but the moms know it's also got the nutrient density behind it. And so it checks off some of those mental bandwidth issues. And to your point, then you have the bandwidth for the things, whether it be Tai Chi, hopefully for some of you, or going on a hike as a family, or just spending time with the family after eating instead of spending all that time, running to the store or defrosting something late because you forgot you were gonna need it or whatever it may be. It solves that mental bandwidth problem.

Antony: Yeah. Yeah. Remember when you were telling us a few weeks ago about you should be eating more seafood, you know, and some shrimp and scallops and things like that? So, I've always been slightly afraid of cooking a scallop. But there was a recipe in there, Real Plan's recipe about scallops. And we were at Whole Foods and we were at the fish section, the fish monger, and scallops were on sale. And I was like, "All right, here's our chance." And so at the fish counter, I pull out Real Plans. I'm like, "All right, put scallops into the search. And there's some recipes, that one." And then it adds it directly to the shopping list I'm seeing, "I didn't even know how much to buy." Anyway, it was delicious. And we had it with Paleo Mom beetroots. And she had it in this tin foil, where you crimp the edges, you know, and you make it like a Dutch oven. And so it was kind of boiling in itself in the oven. It was delicious. And we had it with...and then we had an arugula salad with like a citrusy vinaigrette. It was so delicious. And we felt so good afterwards. But it only came about because I was inspired in the store even to go. And so now you're not gonna carry around 50 recipe books because you're gonna check what's gonna go with that, some garlic and stuff like that, that I needed to have with the scallops. But you can't do that. And so, to make those kind of last-minute decisions is really cool.

Katie: Actually, I love that you brought up arugula because largely thanks to Real Plans, my oldest has developed a very strong love of arugula, and is eating a whole lot of it these days, which I love because it lets you try a lot of new foods. If you don't automatically exclude certain foods, it gives you ideas that you would not have thought of that incorporate ingredients you might not otherwise buy, which goes back to that whole

more nutrient density, more diversity in your diet, and they're delicious. So, I would say, as a mom myself, like I said, this is one of my biggest time savers and it's a money saver for me because we're not wasting food and we're planning more efficiently. So, if you're a mom and you're listening, I would definitely challenge you to try it for a month and see how much time you save because it's one of my top 10 things that saves me time, hands down that I don't ever wanna not have in my life. But any other features related to Real Plans that we need to talk about? And I know you mentioned... I'll make sure the link in the show notes @wellnessmama.fm is the special link that does have my recipe. So, if you guys are listening and want my recipes as well, that'll be the link in the show notes.

Antony: Yeah. There is another thing as well that we realized is that there are ingredients that you don't necessarily want to include in a recipe, but you just buy every week. It's really straightforward. You know, you kind of go, "Well, every week I buy goat cheese," for example, "because I like to make sure that I can just sprinkle a little goat cheese on whatever salad is coming up during that week." Or, "I need to, you know, make sure that we've got enough stuff with the bathrooms and, you know..." And so you just have it on there, on your shopping list as a scheduled item. And it means that even though you are pulling together your recipes, you've still got a set of other ingredients or products that you want to buy as part of your shop. So, you don't need to fuff about with another piece of paper that's like, "Oh, I need the toilet paper. I need this and the that." You just stick it into Real Plans, and it's just all there in one shopping list.

Katie: Yeah. That's so convenient. I'm glad you remembered that part because I do that with... Right now trying to eat more protein, I'll do things like cottage cheese, and certain...just extra proteins that I'll add to other meals. And those will always just be in my Real Plans. So, I do feel like you guys have thought of everything. And there's more, I'm sure we haven't even covered. But, like I said, the link's in there, definitely encourage you guys to check it out. It's totally a game changer for me. And as it always does with you, time flies and conversations are so much fun, but I wanted to make sure we got to a couple last questions...

Antony: We're on an hour already?

Katie: We are. Yes. But a couple last questions I'd love to ask. The first being, if there's a book or number of books that have had a profound impact on your life. And if so, what they are and why?

Antony: Okay. Probably the book that's affected me the most is a book called, Dao De Jing by Laozi, he is the father of Daoism. Daoism was a scary word when I first heard it. I thought it sounded very exotic and everything else, but it's what Tai Chi is rooted in, the idea of balance. And I've gone back to that text so many times in my life, as a way of understanding things better. So, there's kind of like a philosophical kind of thing. I also love "The Prophet" as well. It's just...Kahlil Gibran, of course. My grandmother used to put little quotes in our birthday cards and stuff from Kahlil Gibran, and that's specifically "The Prophet" and I love that book. That's such an amazing read. And especially for, you know, all the moms out there, and you can look it up online too, there's a chapter on parenting and on children. And it talks about how children come through you, and that you can only hope to be like them. And you can house their bodies, but you cannot house their souls. And that you are just the archer that's pointing the arrow in a place that you will never, can't even imagine or dream about. And I've sought a lot of knowledge and comfort from "The Prophet" too. So, yeah. So, the philosophical books are the ones that have really had the most profound effect on me, I guess.

Katie: I love that. I'll put links to both of those in the show notes as well, so you guys can find those if you are listening while you're driving or exercising. And lastly, any parting advice for the listeners today that could be related to any of the many things we've talked about or entirely unrelated?

Antony: I would say that wherever you are, driving along, or watching this, or listening to this in a comfy La-Z-Boy, or wherever you're at, is just to take a moment and take a breath with me right now and just acknowledge that you are here, breathing, living, you have your challenges in life, you have the things that you are proud of in life, but you are here and you are present in this moment. And I think that's the most valuable thing that anyone can have. And you hear it in yoga with the breathing, you hear it in loads of religious texts, but just as being here right now and not projecting your mind backwards or forwards is such a gift. And it just reminds you, you know, if you were on your deathbed right now, you would totally want this minute back again, no matter how tough it is you would go, "Oh, do you remember when I had time to listen to a Wellness Mama Podcast? And I had money for an internet connection and there was an internet." You know, it's just having that gratitude, I think, is just the best. And I hope that everybody gets to feel that just for a few seconds.

Katie: I love that. I think that's a perfect place to wrap up for today. As always, it's so fun to talk to you. And I'm really grateful for you being here and that we got to go into such, I think, really important topics today, and also very grateful as a user for the work you do with Real Plans and how much easier it's made my life. So thank you for being here, and thanks for all that you do.

Antony: Thank you, Katie.

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."

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