Episode 678: Chronic Pain Is Easy to Fix & Fitness Is Even Easier (Here’s How) With Jeff Sidwell
Child: Welcome to my Mommy’s podcast.

This episode is brought to you by Neurohacker. As you probably know, being active with my kids and getting everything done for the day depends on me staying in my prime physically and mentally for as long as possible and valuing the most research-backed ingredients known to science for a better and more graceful and optimized aging process. There's something called senescent cells, also known as zombie cells, that are basically worn out cells that are no longer serving a useful function for our health. They can waste our energy and they take nutritional resources.

They tend to accumulate in our bodies as we age, leading to things like aches and pains, slow recovery, and sluggish mental and physical energy and associated with that middle-aged feeling. Senolytic from Neurohacker is the new thing I'm experimenting with. They're science back to support our body's natural elimination of senescent cells. Neurohacker packs seven of the most science-backed senolytic ingredients into a formula called Qualia Senolytic, and you can take it for just two days a month for fast, noticeable benefits and a much better aging process. But I've been experimenting with this as well. The formula is non-GMO, vegan and gluten-free, and the ingredients are meant to complement one another, factoring in the combined effect of all of them together. It's also backed by a 100-day money-back guarantee, so you have almost three months to try Qualia Senolytic at no risk and decide for yourself. Go to neurohacker.com/mama15 and use the coupon code Mama15 to save 15% on any purchase.

This podcast is brought to you by BonCharge and specifically their Sauna Blanket. I know you've heard me talk about the benefits of sauna before, and I've said that if this was a pill, I think everyone would take it because of the really well-researched benefits of sauna on everything from reduction of all-cause mortality, increased longevity, better cardiovascular markers. Sauna is in general considered an exercise mimetic, meaning that you get many of the same benefits like sweating, like cardiovascular function, and even lymphatic movement from using sauna regularly. But I know that often it's hard to fit a sauna in a house and saunas can be really, really pricey. And that's why I'm so excited to see things like this sauna blanket entering the market. This can really heat up your wellness routine because you get all the benefits of sauna from detoxifying to better sleep, to better skin. This is something I try to make a part of my regular routine at least several times a week. And the blanket makes it even easy to do, even if you don't have a lot of space for a regular sauna, because you can simply pull out this suana blanket and roll it out, turn up the heat, slip inside and enjoy the benefits. Easy clean up with a damp cloth. And then you can just roll it up and store it under a bed or in a closet. I'm a big fan of putting on a podcast or an audiobook and spending 30 to 45 minutes in the sauna. And it feels like a total brain reset and body reset. So I love making this a regular part of my routine. You can check it out by going to boncharge.com/wellnessmama and using the code WellnessMama to save 20% on a sauna blanket.

Katie: Hello, and welcome to The Wellness Mama Podcast. I'm Katie from Wellnessmama.com and this episode goes deep on the topic of how chronic joint pain or back pain is actually easy to fix and why fitness is even easier. I know those are bold statements, but we talk about the how in this episode with Jeff Sidwell and he is a fascinating person. It was really fun to get to interview him and Jeff has helped countless people get pain free and fit for over 18 years, and he's worked with many parents, executives, kids, sports injuries,
including also athletes in the NFL, the NBA, celebrities and Olympic athletes. But he's found he's most passionate about helping everyday people live their lives in the way they've always envisioned and being healthier and more mobile in their life.

What makes him unique is that from the age of 21, he's combined body work, physical rehab and personal training in a unique system. And he said often you can spend an enormous amount of time and money on seeing multiple practitioners. But he thoroughly studied the best in all of these methodologies and distilled them into a simple formula that he calls Relax, rewire and retrain. And we go deep on his approach today.

We talk about things like why he does a fun yearly event called Challenge the Trainer, where his clients and friends can challenge him to do various feats of strength and embarrassing things and it raises money for charity. Why he loves working with parents, specifically. His bold statements that chronic pain is easy to fix and becoming fit is even easier. He talks about the simple things that help us stay pain free and fit as we get older, why certain movements can lead to injury if our bodies aren't ready, how to increase mind muscle connection for more effective workouts and movement. We talk about his near death experience and things that have helped shaped his mindset around this, and why mindset is such a big key.

We talk about the nervous system tie in and why some of these methodologies can actually help improve heart rate variability and sleep because of that. How breathwork can burn more fat than exercise, including some really crazy statistics he has and from working with his clients where people lost 15 pounds or more simply by adding breathwork. And how this makes sense when we understand that 84% of fat loss is through our breath.

And he talks about how just 10 to 15 minutes a day of adding in these things can have a substantial result. Like I said, he was a fascinating interview and I have been trying out his online program as well, which I will link to in the show notes these are relatively easy things that you can do and add into your daily routine that don't take a lot of time. And I've been doing them with my kids, especially my high school athletes, to help everybody hopefully stay injury proof, especially with the activities that they're doing. And now as I'm training for Heptathlon as well, so I learned a lot from Jeff. I know that you will as well. So without any further ado, let's join Jeff Sidwell. Jeff. Welcome. Thank you so much for being here.

Jeff: Hey, thank you so much for having me.

Katie: Well, I have a feeling we're going to get to go in a lot of directions, and I am extremely excited on a personal level to learn from you because this lines up with some things that I'm doing in my own life right now. And you have expertise in many areas that I think synergize really, really well. So I'm very excited for this episode, and we're going to get to go deep on all those topics. But before we do, I have a note from your bio that you do something every year called, I think, Challenge the Trainer, where your clients get to challenge you to all kinds of various feats. And I would love to hear how that started. And also what are some of the craziest and most fun challenges you've gotten.
Jeff: I'm glad you're bringing this up. So it's a fundraiser that I do every year, and the basic concept is that I put my clients through, “pain” all year long. And so you guys have 24 hours to issue a challenge to me of a feat of strength and or make it embarrassing too. And so a lot of clients this past year went more for the embarrassing things than they did for the feats of strength, which was a trip for me. They know my social phobias would be singing in public and dancing, and that was definitely one of them. On Pearl Street in Boulder, Colorado, where I live, I had to sing a song from Moana and Dance to it, and it was my nightmare. Pearl street is one of the busiest streets. It's where a lot of tourists are. And so you can find on my Instagram NextStep.fit me singing and doing my best to dance to the song while in public, and it was the absolute worst.

But the catch that really makes it mutually beneficial is the harder the challenge, the more I ask for my clients or patrons to pony up to donate to the cause that I'm working on that year. So if you go really embarrassing or really physically challenging, I'm going to say, okay, what are you going to do to match that? Because that's a big on taking. So we've raised some good money this recent, was recently raising money for a library in Tanzania for a school that I'm connected to. And we're doing a lot of good things. So it's fun, but it's 24 hours, it's grueling, and it's a blast at the same time.

Katie: I love that, and I love that you do it to raise money for good causes as well. I think that's such a fun tradition. And I'm with you on dancing and singing in public are scary to me as well. I took voice lessons, actually to get out of my comfort zone because it was the scariest thing I could imagine.

Jeff: Me too. Me too. And it's still terrifying to me.

Katie: Oh, well, that's awesome. I love that. And I think for background and context, I would love for you to explain a little bit about the work you do and maybe especially what interested you on coming on a podcast that's almost exclusively for moms since you don't have kids yourself yet, from what I understand.

Jeff: Correct? Yes. So what I found with my own parents and to so many of my clients over the last 18, 19 years is when you have children, whether it's one children or four or five or six, I come from a family of six, four kids and two parents. It becomes a thing where I see the parents neglect themselves for the love of their kids and as a result they get out of shape and they lose some of their social life in different ways. And then at the 18 to 22 years, once the kids are up and out of the house, they're trying to really get from behind the eight ball and reclaim their lives, take back their lives. And I saw that with my parents, I saw that with countless clients.

And so my passion is really working with everyday people and especially parents. Because one, when we're in our 20s and if we haven't had kids yet, we envision what kind of parent we think we'll be and then we start to neglect ourselves through having when we have kids. And all of a sudden we get aches and pains and we get out of shape and we can't be that parent that we envisioned ourselves being. And so I want everybody to be the mom and the dad, the spouse, the coworker, the friend that they want to be, pain free and fit and it takes...
less than 20 minutes a day to help do that. And so this is why I want to be on this podcast, because there's a very simple way to get pain free and fit, regardless of how much you have going on. It's just finding those little moments in the day to implement your own self-care and be who you want to really be.

Katie: Yeah, I love that approach. I've learned many things from my kids over the years, but one of the lessons they've taught me is that while what we say is important, what we model is even more important. And that's actually been a big driver for me in trying not just to maintain my fitness, but improve it as I get older, also to keep up with them as they become more and more athletic. But you make a couple bold statements on your social media and I've seen you talk about this online and I love this. You say that chronic pain is easy to fix and getting fit is even easier. And I would guess many people haven't quite had that experience at times. So I would love for you to explain those statements and then we can build from there.

Jeff: Yes. So chronic pain is just an indication of a lack of homeostasis, meaning your body wants to be pain free. And when we are imbalanced, meaning carrying a kid on your right hip and your right arm, but not your left hip and your left arm, when we are imbalanced and we do the same repetitive patterns over and over again, we no longer have homeostasis. And at some point that's going to show up as pain. And so all we need to do is maintain balance, which is again, 20 minutes a day or less. The right stretches, the right exercises in the right order, keep you pain free, keep you balanced, and therefore you're in homeostasis.

And the shocking thing is good posture should feel good and bad posture should feel bad. And most of the time when we try to practice good posture, we almost feel like we're military, like we're really trying to force our shoulders down and back. But no, if we position the body to be balanced front to back and left to right, our shoulders want to be down and back. Our abs want to be slightly engaged. Our low back doesn't want to be compressed, which especially with a kid on one hip or women have more of this arched back where you get compression in the low back with those things come at some point, chronic pain. And so 15 stretches and exercises a day keeps you balanced and keeps your body active in the way it's supposed to be. And then all a of sudden pain doesn't have to exist. TMJ, tension headaches, migraines, carpal tunnel, plantar fascia, none of these things have to exist. If we just have the right basic methodology, the right foundation.

Katie: Yeah, that's definitely encouraging. And you mentioned or you touched on a couple that I would guess are very common for new parents, like with the low back pain or the hip imbalance from holding a baby. I've certainly experienced that. What are some of the most common kind of imbalances that you see in parents, especially?

Jeff: Yeah, so it is the low back, the hips, and one shoulder more than the other. I mean, I can look at countless moms and their right shoulder or their left shoulder is higher than the other. And in the middle of that is the spine. Between left to right is your spine. And chiropractors are super valuable. And also you don't have to be dependent on them because if you keep those muscles relaxed, then the spine isn't being pulled to one way more than the other, and then the spine isn't out of alignment. And so all these little things where it's neck and shoulder pain and it's hips and low back, those are the primary. And of course, when women are in pregnancy, it's plantar fasciitis also.
And I have a great client way back in the day when I was 23. I'm 39 now. Her name was Damien and she was on her fourth kid and I had not worked with her for the previous three. I was new in my career, hadn't met her before, and she's pregnant when I meet her, about two months pregnant. And she's like, well, at month four, I get sciatic nerve pain. At month five, I get plantar fasciitis, and at month nine, I get tension headaches. And she had none of those through working with me because we just did the right stretches and the right exercises and then past that, she was usually on bed rest for four days after giving birth. That was just her body. It was so traumatic to her body. And after working with me, she was on bed rest for 6 hours and she showered that same day and all these things. So it's really phenomenal how much of this doesn't have to exist. But to your point, it's low back pain, hips, neck and shoulders every time.

Katie: That makes sense. And because everything's so connected, I've seen that play out for me with pregnancy is if your hips are imbalanced, that's going to affect how you're walking. So your knees and your ankles may also experience issues. Or I had a friend explain to me one time I thought I was having just hip pain and he was like, yeah, but look at your knee, look at your ankle. Like all of these things downstream are being affected because of this imbalance.

And I also loved his approach because he was similar. He said chiropractors are great, all of these healing modalities are great, body work is great. However, you're not having this issue because of a body work deficiency or a chiropractor deficiency. You still want to also address what's going on in how you're moving or sitting or going through life that's leading to this in the first place. And it sounds like that's very much what your approach is.

And I feel like you're also very encouraging because you talk about this not being a two hour a day of cardio at the gym type endeavor, that this is actually very achievable, even for people as busy as parents. So what are some of those core things that for parents especially, we need to integrate?

Jeff: Yeah. So what we are terrible at is, well, let me start with what we're good at. We're really good at doing the action, but we're really bad at treating the reaction. And so we say, okay, I'm going to get in shape and I only have 20 minutes, I'm going to go run. And we haven't run in two years. And when we run, or let's say jog, because that's where most of us are when we jog, it is a three to one ratio, meaning it's your body weight times three that the earth presses into you. So you take that jogging step and your body weight presses down into the earth, and the earth presses three times your body weight back into your body. So nobody wants to do this exercise. But if I take 180 pounds, which is what I weigh times three, I haven't trained to be able to handle that amount of weight.

And so if I haven't, then of course I'm going to get injured in the meantime because I'm doing calculus when my body is only ready for addition and subtraction. And so when we think, okay, I've got limited time and I'm going to go get it, I'm going to get after it, we miss the mark a lot of times. For every action, there's that equal and opposite reaction of sorts, and we have to stretch as much as we exercise. And what I like about the
methodology that I've developed is that almost every exercise I do with my clients has a stretch component and a flexion.

So squats usually just build tension, and we usually work the wrong muscles when we do squats. The squats I have people do has a stretch component for the inner thighs and the outer hips and the low back, and then a flexion component to build strength on those muscles, plus the quads. So, long story short, I would say if you don't have a good stretch to strength ratio, then you're just likely going to compile tension in your body, which will lead to pain. And then therefore, subconsciously, your mind will say, I'm in pain when I work out. I shouldn't work out anymore. My heel hurts when I jog or when I walk. I'm less likely to jog or walk then. And that's just a subconscious protection. But that we do that year over year, and we end up where we don't want to be, which is out of shape and in pain and not energized and all these things.

Katie: That makes sense. And it sounds like these could also be very much proactive for any of us listening who have kids who are very athletic or in sports, I would guess. Some of these same things that they can start them at an earlier age can also help sort of injury proof them as they go through that as well.

Jeff: Yes, I was always a runt when I was 14 going into high school, I was 95 pounds and four foot eleven. Okay. But I was always biomechanically minded. I always knew how the body should work. It's a gift of some sort. And so I would be working out with the football team because my brother was on the football team, and the coaches would steal the cues and the things that I was doing different and share it with the actual football players. And kids are so many coaches, even to this day in 2023, are not good at strengthening conditioning. And so kids are getting injured at an increased rate. Coaches are having them do more pain, more gain workouts, and none of that has to be the case to get the best results. So if kids can learn to use the right muscles correctly, they'll be stronger than they've ever been and safer for the long term. So we're like, man, if I didn't do those things when I was 20, I would be so much better when I was 40. It's like, that doesn't have to exist for parents and for kids. We can reverse all of that and change the culture.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's such important context. And you touched on this, but the idea of no pain, no gain, which you definitely hear, at least in high school sports, especially ones like football, it seems, and you've said that is antiquated. And I would love for you to explain why and what a better approach would be.

Jeff: Yeah. So again, for everyday people, it is about neuromuscular activation. And so what that means is mind to muscle, most of our bodies are only operating at 30 or 40% muscularly. So when you go to pick up a dumbbell, you're actually usually only recruiting about 40% of the muscle that's available. And so if I can teach you how to implement or activate 20, 30, 40, 50 more percent, it's almost impossible to get 100% muscular activation. But if we can get somebody up to 80% when two weeks ago they were at 40%, they are, and this isn't hyperbole. They are twice as strong. And so most of us, again, are only using 40%. And it doesn't take pain. It just takes increasing the neurology, the mind to body connection, the mind to muscle connection to get strong. And that's not pain. That's not I'm doing 90 minutes on the treadmill. That's not I'm throwing big weight around to try to grow a muscle. That's just waking things up that are already there and then building incremental strength on it. So more pain, more gain is bogus, if I can use a family friendly word.
And really, it's about just every day. If I can do some simple things to wake up the muscles, then you get well. Women love this trick. I teach everybody, but I teach women especially how to use your glutes when you walk, which you should be doing anyway. But most of us are just using our quads. Nobody wants to get bigger quads, right? Like, women work out, they're like, well, my thighs got bigger and my butt stayed the same. That's not the result that anybody's going for. But when I teach women, you can use your glutes when you walk and then all of a sudden you see, oh, I'm not doing a ton of glute exercises every day, but every step I take, ideally 10,000 steps a day, that's 5000 mini contractions for the glute. My butt looks bigger and I'm not doing anything more, or I mean, bigger, better, excuse me, better. And I'm not doing anything more. It's just now my butt's activated and so my glutes and my backside looks lifted and more toned because I'm using it during all the little things as opposed to just 90 minutes workouts three times a week.

Katie: And I know you have resources for this online. I'm going to make sure we link to them in the show notes, because I'm sure a lot of this is much more easily explained in visuals than just us talking. But can you give examples or cues specific to…. I think using glutes while walking is such an important one and I know it's one I've been trying to learn also. So selfishly, I would love for you to just explain a little bit more. And I'll also link to where people can find the how to.

Jeff: Yes. So bridges, you know, that the exercise bridges lined on your back. If you line your back, you bend your knees and so your feet are flat. Everybody has done a bridge, whether it's in yoga class, which I teach yoga also, or whether it's in a workout or anything else. But most people are using quads and calves and therefore straining their low back as opposed to using their glutes and their hamstrings. The easiest cue in the world to get your glutes to engage is to press through your heels. So you relax the rest of the foot and you press the heel down and your butt will flex. And you can even do this kind of almost while you're seated. If you press your heels down, you'll see yourself lift through your glutes a little bit or a leg extension when you're standing and doing a standing leg extension where your straight leg is just going back a little bit. If you relax the foot, which relaxes the calf and the quad and then just bring the heel back, you'll flex your glute in a way that you haven't felt before when you flex your foot. And here's on the visual for anybody watching this on YouTube and everything, if you flex your foot, your shin and your calf flex and then all of a sudden your shin and your calf are doing some of the work and you're not actually getting that work to the glute. So people are doing the right exercises but using the wrong muscles. So the starting point would be lie on your back, bend your knees so your feet are flat, press the heels down to lift your hips and you'll feel your glutes in a more effective way. And then we can teach you how to use that when you're actually in motion with walking or anything else.

Katie: And I feel like this is especially an important one as we get older as well, because I've talked before, it's a little bit of a soapbox for me, but about muscle being the organ of longevity. And we know statistically the more muscle we have, typically, the less risk of all cause mortality. It correlates with a lot of increased health as we get older. So I've had personally a big focus on building and retaining muscle and mobility. I'm curious with this. So it makes sense that you'd see an immediate change just from muscle recruitment. But does this also help us build muscle over time so that we're increasing strength and muscle mass?
Jeff: Yes. I have a lot of women that are afraid of getting bulky because what you just shared, people are like, oh my God, I'm going to get bulky. And CrossFit is showing more and more women with super ripped abs, super ripped arms, and that's all okay. They're usually supplementing in a big way, but women just with different testosterone levels in an exponential level compared to men, men have exponentially more testosterone. Women are not going to gain bulk unless you're really working for that. So with that said, yes, the more muscle you can develop and again, if the whole muscle is active, then you can build strength on the whole muscle. And so most of us guys are notorious for doing push ups and they get kind of one part of their pec developed, but not the rest of their pec developed. And women get one part of their glute developed, but not the rest of the glute. If you can wake up that whole muscle, meaning mind of muscle connection that we talked about, then you're building strength and flexibility on the whole muscle. And that's where the value, that's the secret sauce to longevity within working out.

I want to be, I'm 39 and I gratefully can do anything that I want to do physically because I have the right methodology that positions me to do that. So I decided to run ultramarathons for two and a half years and all I had to do was make sure that my ratio was right. If I'm doing the right strengthening and the right stretching, I was pain free and fit for two and a half years of running 70 miles a week plus. I share that because if I can beat the tar out of my body for two and a half years and never get one injury, that means everybody else can be pain free and fit too. It's just more muscle in the right way, gets you pain free and fit until you're 70, 80, 90, for a lifetime. And that's my goal for myself and for everybody else.

Katie: Well, and I can definitely attest to what you said about I used to actually have that belief that I didn't want to lift heavy weights because I didn't want to get bulky. And now having done that consistently for a few years, it's so laughable to me in hindsight that I thought I was going to sneeze and get bulky. I worked so hard and while I'm getting leaner and stronger, I'm definitely not getting bulkier. So I always like to encourage that for women. I also want to talk about the distinction and make sure people understand. So when we're talking about being pain free, this is also like injury and chronic pain versus is it normal to be sore when we add in new movements that we haven't done before, to have some muscle soreness while we adapt.

Jeff: For sure, there's a transition for everything. And even I keep the humble attitude. Like, I do a lot of different styles of workouts, but if I do a new style of workout, I plan on being the worst person in the class and also sore for a couple of days just because even if I've done movements that are similar, they're not the exact same. And so you're going to have some soreness in that. Meantime, lactic acid and micro tears generally are happening, and so there is some of that discomfort, but then after a couple of weeks of doing that new movement, the pain goes away.

My client back in the day, his name was Chip, and he was the most type A client I've had to date. He brought in five years worth of spreadsheets on his health and fitness, and he had the more pain, more gain mentality. And I looked at it for about a minute just to be polite, and I was like, all right, forget everything you've ever known. And he came in the next week, he's like, I am not sore after any of our workouts. Are we going to get results? And sure enough, I was like, stay with me. My methodology works. It's not more pain, and this is 17, 18 years ago. It's not more pain, more gain. And sure enough, he had a lower body fat percentage and better flexibility, less pain and more muscle. By doing a methodology that isn't beating the heck out of the body, it's
treating it well. You should feel better after a workout instead of worse, but most of us are just trying to beat ourselves up and get back to work, and it's not working for us. It's creating more chronic stress and therefore more chronic pain.

Katie: And you touched on something from a mindset component that I absolutely love and it's a struggle for me. But that idea of you walk into new movements with the anticipation that you're going to be the worst at it at the beginning and you still are willing to try it. I think for a lot of people, at least type A, first born types like me, it's hard to want to do a thing you're not already good at, but also some of the most valuable things in life come on the other end of that comfort zone. But I feel like this touches on a mindset piece, and I would love to hear more about your mindset because in researching your bio, it sounds like you have quite an incredible life story already, that you've been sober for quite some time, that you had a near death experience. And I would guess things like that have really helped form your mindset, which the older I get, the more I learn. It seems like it's 90% mindset. And then if we get our mindset right the rest comes more naturally. So I would love to hear kind of the evolution of your mindset and some of these kind of pivotal experiences.

Jeff: Yeah, it's been a trip, quite literally. And the first thing I'll share, just to answer the question directly, is we have a lot of self-imposed stress. We have chosen a lot of our stressors in our life, and working out is the epitome of that. How many people complain about working out and they grimace when they're working out and all this stuff. And I'm like, I try to go to the gym and not be annoying where I'm like, smiling the whole time, but I at least try to keep a neutral face if not smiling at some point, because why am I going to complain about something I signed up for? I am here, and this is making me better. And even if it's uncomfortable in the meantime, why am I complaining and grumpy and all that? It's like, no, I'm lucky to be able to work out. I am lucky to be able to move as I do.

And so first things first, a lot of our stressors are self imposed, and so how much can I really complain about them? Secondly, yeah, when I was 25, gratefully life had given me enough evidence, or I had collected enough evidence to say, you know what? I don't think drinking is just a fun hobby. I think I actually have a problem. Gratefully I got sober at 25. Unfortunately, and this is some of the framing you're talking about, unfortunately, my brother passed away from his alcoholism two months into my sobriety. And talk about framing. It's like, some people are like, oh, that's so sad. You get sober and then your brother passes away, which is absolutely true, but it's like, I had the mindset, I got myself sober. I'm going to help my brother get sober, and then we're going to help anybody else that wants or needs to get sober get sober. And that's not what life said. Life, all of a sudden, my brother passes away, and I'm like, okay. Life got me into recovery just in the nick of time so that I could give the right eulogy, I could honor my brother's life in the right way, and that I wasn't going to act on my addiction as a result of his passing. And gratefully, I've stayed sober for 14 years. But that framing of that mindset, some people had pity and victim for me. And while it was the worst, like the worst happened and terrible and sad, there was a level of gratitude for me being able to get sober beforehand so that I could properly live and live from an inspired state and carry my brother's spirit with me throughout the rest of my life.

And then my near death experience was five or six years ago, coming up on six years ago, and I was doing Freediving training for, I was going to Hawaii in a month, and I wanted to, without scuba equipment, I wanted
to dive down 40ft and hold my breath for a couple of minutes and hang with octopus and lobster and all this stuff. And so I was training for that. And in the pool, I went unconscious, and I was underwater for about five and a half minutes total. I could hold my breath for 3 minutes in the morning or two and a half minutes in the afternoon after coffee and movement and all that type of stuff. And I went unconscious. And they pulled me up, they did CPR, I was unconscious, I was seizing. They got me to the hospital gratefully, that was nearby. There was an off duty lifeguard that was teaching children how to swim. So sadly, I had to go back a couple of weeks later and be like, hey kids, I'm okay, like you saw something traumatic. But I went back and talked to them a couple of times.

But all of that said I was in a coma for two and a half days and in the hospital for seven. And I gratefully. Came out fine. I have less than a 1% chance of being here as I am. I had a 95, 96% chance of dying and a great chance of being a vegetable, essentially. And instead, two and a half days in a coma, I woke up and I was like, how are you guys doing? And doctors were crying, nurses were crying, my family was crying. Miracle was thrown out there a number of times from the doctors themselves.

And after being self employed for, I think, nine or ten years at that time, my mindset what I learned from that was even when I'm completely out of control, the universe, life, higher power, God, can still be supportive. Life is still supportive. And being self employed, it's like I have to be the bookkeeper, and then I have to submit that to my CPA, and I've got to do my marketing, and I've got to do my customer service. There's so many things I have to control that into this moment when I had no control, things were still synergistically in place that gratefully in this moment, the best worked out. And so it taught me to relax. It taught me to let go, trust the process more. Nine years being self employed and probably made me a little too uptight, and it was just a really good reset to say, okay, even when you weren't trying to manage everything, even when you couldn't manage everything, life still had your back. That really taught me to, again, get back in the flow of things and be of service to people and fully thrive instead of try to kind of control and manage and all that, if that makes sense.

Katie: Yeah, it does. And that's quite the story. I feel like for me as well, looking back at the toughest moments of life that I end up being the most grateful for, because they're the most formative and impactful. And not that I would have chosen some of those experiences, but I wouldn't trade them either. And it sounds like the same is true for you.

Jeff: Absolutely. We all have our stuff and it's just can I find a centered place and respond accordingly or do I get into reaction mode as a result and get off center for months, years, decades, any of that? So yeah, I'm with you on that.

This episode is brought to you by Neurohacker. As you probably know, being active with my kids and getting everything done for the day depends on me staying in my prime physically and mentally for as long as possible and valuing the most research-backed ingredients known to science for a better and more graceful and optimized aging process. There's something called senescent cells, also known as zombie cells, that are
basically worn out cells that are no longer serving a useful function for our health. They can waste our energy and they take nutritional resources.

They tend to accumulate in our bodies as we age, leading to things like aches and pains, slow recovery, and sluggish mental and physical energy and associated with that middle-aged feeling. Senolytic from Neurohacker is the new thing I'm experimenting with. They're science back to support our body's natural elimination of senescent cells. Neurohacker packs seven of the most science-backed senolytic ingredients into a formula called Qualia Senolytic, and you can take it for just two days a month for fast, noticeable benefits and a much better aging process. But I've been experimenting with this as well. The formula is non-GMO, vegan and gluten-free, and the ingredients are meant to complement one another, factoring in the combined effect of all of them together. It's also backed by a 100-day money-back guarantee, so you have almost three months to try Qualia Senolytic at no risk and decide for yourself. Go to neurohacker.com/mama15 and use the coupon code Mama15 to save 15% on any purchase.

This podcast is brought to you by BonCharge and specifically their Sauna Blanket. I know you've heard me talk about the benefits of sauna before, and I've said that if this was a pill, I think everyone would take it because of the really well-researched benefits of sauna on everything from reduction of all-cause mortality, increased longevity, better cardiovascular markers. Sauna is in general considered an exercise mimetic, meaning that you get many of the same benefits like sweating, like cardiovascular function, and even lymphatic movement from using sauna regularly. But I know that often it's hard to fit a sauna in a house and saunas can be really, really pricey. And that's why I'm so excited to see things like this sauna blanket entering the market. This can really heat up your wellness routine because you get all the benefits of sauna from detoxifying to better sleep, to better skin. This is something I try to make a part of my regular routine at least several times a week. And the blanket makes it even easy to do, even if you don't have a lot of space for a regular sauna, because you can simply pull out this suana blanket and roll it out, turn up the heat, slip inside and enjoy the benefits. Easy clean up with a damp cloth. And then you can just roll it up and store it under a bed or in a closet. I'm a big fan of putting on a podcast or an audiobook and spending 30 to 45 minutes in the sauna. And it feels like a total brain reset and body reset. So I love making this a regular part of my routine. You can check it out by going to boncharge.com/wellnessmama and using the code WellnessMama to save 20% on a sauna blanket.

Katie: I'd love to talk more about the kind of proofing ourselves against chronic pain side as well. Like I mentioned, I know you have a whole video library related to that that I will link to in the show notes if you want to maybe give some context on that as well. But I feel like some objections that people might have listening might be things like, does this require tremendous amount of equipment or time or money? So I'd love to address some of those because I think for parents especially, those are some top of mind concerns.

Jeff: For sure, for sure. So one to all your listeners, I will have a link giving you guys 30% off because I'm grateful to be here. And again, this is a segment of people that I especially love helping, from my own see my own parents, to seeing most of my clients. I want to help you guys, and I know that the budget can be tight, so I want to give you guys 30% off with that. The subscription comes with all the equipment you need. I do have limited quantities, but there's a pain free and fit kit that comes with the subscription. And so as long as supplies last, I will be able to send that with it. And if not, I'll adjust the price. But it's $297 minus the 30% for
six months access, and it includes all the equipment. It's free, shipped free to you guys, and then you have everything you need in this gym bag to be pain free and fit.

And with that, it's simply if we get the ratio right, we're pain free and fit, meaning a three to one ratio is what I landed on. If we say I'm going to work out for an hour and then stretch afterwards, we never stretch afterwards. So if we say whatever our mind, whatever amount of time our mind has allotted to work out, take off 25% and your workout is going to be 45 minutes and your stretching will be 15 minutes, and that keeps you pain free and fit for a lifetime if you're doing your traditional at the gym workouts.

Now, if you access my video library, then it is. I've got pain free protocols. So if you got tension headaches, there's four stretches that resolve 80 plus percent of everyone's migraines and tension headaches. And I got a story about that if you want to get fit. There's a get fit library that has the right exercises with some stretches. And like I said, most exercises have a stretch in them. So you get this full access, 24/7 access to pain free protocols and get fit protocols, and all the equipment is provided. And again, my workouts are maybe the most advanced one, might be 30 minutes, but it's somewhere between 20 and 30 minutes. And that's all it really takes to get the changes you want to do.

Nutrition does factor in, but it's all about intrinsic motivation. So let's start with getting pain free, and then let's start with getting fit. And then if you want accelerated weight loss or if you want accelerated energy gains, then we talk nutrition too. But get pain free so you don't have any physical impedances. Get fit the right way and then choose your adventure after that.

Katie: One thing I've noticed anecdotally, but I'm wondering if you know of any backing for this, is that when I do things like stretching and mobility regularly, I see improvements in sleep, but especially in HRV. And my only thought is that this might be something related to the nervous system and the body feeling more at ease because you're more balanced. But have you seen that with other clients? I've just always been curious why that is.

Jeff: Yeah, at the most basic level, when you're taking pressure off your spine, your central nervous system feels better. And I'll get real nerdy here for a moment. The dura mater in your brain actually travels down all the way to your low back. And so when you can stretch your low back, when you can stretch, do some mobility, cat cow posture from yoga, when you can stretch your neck a little bit, your brain is actually getting your central nervous system, too, all the way up to the brain is getting relief. And so sleep definitely will be improved. And with that comes HRV in a less stressed state for the body. So that's a great observation. And the one on one level is just your traction and you're giving space to what is usually compressed by gravity all day, every day. And that's relaxing to the body. The body thanks you. It's nourishing.

Katie: And you mentioned it all kind of starts here and that you can build on with nutrition or with other things once you kind of get these basics figured out. And I've had that approach. Realizing more and more over the years, is that while it's really enticing to want to try all these new biohacks or supplements or all the fancy...
things, it's those foundational things that really, over time, make the biggest impact. And at the very least, we need to get those dialed in before we add on the fancy biohacks or the expensive supplements, because then those things are going to work better. And so I go back to on the nutrition side and the work I do, more on things like morning sunlight, getting your nutrition dialed in, improving your sleep, just basics like that. Getting some movement figured out before you're trying to add in very specific workouts or really heavy strength training or red lights or whatever the things are. But I'm curious, from your approach, what would be those things for you? Obviously, these are going to be foundational core things that everyone can benefit from. But do you find value in more specific biohacks or other add ons once people get these dialed in?

Jeff: Yes. So again, the body, if it's not in homeostasis, if it's got friction, if it's got tension patterns pulling you more one way than the other, all these supplements can benefit, but you're wasting a lot of money. And so they've got their place, but you're not getting everything out of it. And so, yes, get the muscles. My basic methodology is relax, rewire, retrain. And so relax dysfunctional muscles, rewire them to work properly and then build strength. And if you do those things you'll find you don't need, like you said, if you stretch, you don't need the sleep supplement nearly as much as you did without stretching. It's like all these dependencies aren't necessary. What is necessary is a little bit of an attention span. 20 minutes. We've got such a flavor of the month and Instagram where it's like 92nd bicep blast type of stuff and it's like, let's give it 20 minutes a day and you're great. That's all it really requires. Because our body is phenomenal and our body wants to be healthy and whole and in the proper homeostasis. And so if we position it that way, it'll stay that way.

And then you can say like, sleep is my biggest health challenge. I'm fine with stretching, I'm fine with doing activity, I'm fine with meditating and breath work and all these things. Sleep has always been my challenge. So then I take a supplement for sleep, but I don't need a supplement for 16 other things because I have my body in homeostasis in a lot of ways. And then the other thing I'd say is just breathwork cannot be, I'll say oversold. When we are stressed, we only use 20% of our breath, 20% of our lungs. And if a company operates at 20%, it fails.

And if our bodies only have 20% of its oxygen that it needs, it's no surprise that anxiety is up or depression is up, or lethargy is up. It's like going to work and your keyboard doesn't work, the computer monitor is on, but you can't type anything. Or if you had headphones on like you do, but your microphone isn't working, we're not going to be able to do our thing. And so without oxygen and with that comes hydration. I would say drink water so you can deliver H2O. Without that basic need, our body can't function as it needs to. And then what people don't know is, and biohack always cracks me up because it sounds new, but most of the biohacks are ancient. Cold exposure and breath work and all these things are ancient. And the fitness world is just redesigning them to be new and revolutionary. When we've known this for 5000 plus years. Breath work actually burns fat as much, if not more than anything else. And nobody knows that. Nobody accepts that. And if you have time for a story, I'd love to tell you how a new client did that just through breath work. He lost 15 pounds. Could I share that real quick?

Katie: Yeah, absolutely, please do.
Jeff: So this person came in and he had been busting his butt for months, and he had lost 30 pounds, but he still had about 25 pounds that he could lose and wanted to lose. And he had plateaued. So he busted his butt. He was working out every day of the week and he had plateaued for the last couple of months. And he's like, I don't know what's going on. I've seen some of your content on Instagram. It looks great. And I said, you know what you're actually missing, like, yes, we cleaned up some of his form on his workouts, on his exercises, but what you're actually missing is breathwork. And we cocked his head sideways and I told the story. Most of us know the magician David Blaine. So David Blaine went to set the world record for the longest breath hold. And this was back probably 2001, I think. I was 17. I've always been exercise science nerd and all this. I was 17 and I was watching the two hour special. He was going to put himself in a hamster ball full of water on Times Square and hold his breath for the world record.

And so I'm watching this two hour special about his process, and he said, I lost the most weight when.... and then it cut to commercial, I was like, all right, he's going to say some kind of Mario Lopez cardio kickboxing or some kind of Tybo or whatever, all the things that were trending. He's going to say something like that, I'm going to be frustrated. Let's see what he says. And he came back from commercial and he said, I lost the most weight when I dove into my deep breathing exercises. And so I shared this with this client and I showed him one breath exercise to do, and he did it for 15 days straight. And I told him, I was like, for the first six days, nothing's going to happen. And after that you're going to lose three to five pounds. And then after that you're going to plateau again for a couple of days, and after that you'll lose a few more pounds. I saw him 15 days later and he had lost 13 pounds. And it was just because he did breath work.

Katie: That is fascinating and I would guess is new information for a lot of people listening do you have any idea what's going on physiologically? Like why that process is so rapid and what's happening in the body that allows that release of weight?

Jeff: Yes. So adipose tissue, fatty tissue, is oxygen soluble. And so oxygen has to have time to get into an adipose, a fat cell, and actually chip away at it, break it down. But when our heart rate is 170 because we're thinking more pain, more gain, and I've got to run as hard as I can on the treadmill, it doesn't have time to get into the adipose tissue. And so it grabs fast food, which is a carbohydrate, and if we're over training, it's even worse. It grabs carbohydrates and protein, our muscle. So if we can slow down and work out again the neutral face or smiling when I work out, if I'm in a parasympathetic state as best I can, if I'm reminding my body that, yes, I'm stressing myself by choice. But I don't have to be stressed. Our body will let go of what we wanted to let go of and gain what we wanted to gain, which is muscle.

And so the other easy example is oxygen is like a combustible engine for fat cells. So it gets into that fat cell and it just burns. It literally will help burn it up. And we actually exhale. Here's the other thing about breath work. When we say we burned fat or we lost weight and somebody posed the question, where did it go? If we lost it, where can we find it? He did a scientific study on it and 84% of weight loss, of fat loss is through your breath. So if you're doing cardio or if you're doing breathwork and you're losing weight, 84% of it is exhaled and the rest is waste product. But it's just that simple.
If we can dive into and I'll provide a free video for you guys on square breathing, which is what my client used to burn 13 pounds in 15 days, the body will let go, like when it's in homeostasis and we're encouraging it to let go of things that we want it to, it will. But if we're stressed, it's going to hold on to what we don't want it to hold on to.

Katie: I will make sure to link to that video in the show notes as well for you guys listening on the go. All of that's always at wellnessmama.fm, but it sounds like this is also another one that's not a massive time commitment, but what amount of breathing per day or breath work? We're breathing all day long, but what amount of breath work per day do typically people do to see those kind of results?

Jeff: Yeah, if you wanted to focus on breath work, it would be ten to 15 minutes. And this is where people start to get frustrated with like, well, he said 20 minutes and now it's an extra 15 minutes. And I'm sure he's going to say do this for another 20 minutes. Like, no. If you want to focus on breathwork just for 15 minutes, 20 minutes a day for two weeks, you'll see results. And then if you want to do 10 minutes breathwork and 10 minutes of stretching, you'll see results. And if you want to do 10 minutes of the right workouts, the right exercises in the right way, and 10 minutes of breathwork, like you start to mix and match and say, okay, like when I was running a lot, I was meditating less, but I was stretching a lot also. And I was like, okay, I'm going to drop off on my meditation a little bit because we can't do everything.

I always say if we did everything we need to do to take care of ourselves, we want to have time for a full time job, we want to have time for kids and a spouse. But if we just mix and match and say, okay, I'm running more, I better treat the reaction to my body more. So I stretched more, but I left meditation a little bit. And then now that I'm running less, I'm meditating more and we just let things ebb and flow. And so if you just want to do breathwork 20 minutes, do it safely. Always check with your doctor for all these things first and then with breathwork, too. I'll say this disclaimer, do it lying down. Because if you've been hypo oxygenated, meaning under oxygenated, and then you give yourself a lot of oxygen, you're going to get lightheaded. And I don't want you to be driving for sure. Just lie down and do breathwork for a week like that and then sitting. Breathwork is probably okay after that.

Katie: And I'm personally a big fan of habit stacking. If anytime I can put multiple things together to help integrate them. Is there a time of day that is better or worse for any of these things? For instance, morning sunlight is a regular habit for me. Could someone do some of these stretching movements in the morning while getting sunlight? Is breathwork better before bed? Or does it really not matter timing as long as we're getting these things in?

Jeff: Yeah, so I love that too. And one of my favorite stretches, because I'm a very lazy stretcher, is legs up the wall. And so what you do is you go up to a wall, you sit down next to it, and then you bring your legs up the wall and you're lying on your back. So you're at a 90 degree angle with your feet up, and that is traction for the low back. That is a light stretch for the hamstrings and the calves. And that's also stretching fascia, and it's also stretching that dura mater that connects to the brain and so that one stretch does wonders for everybody, especially for new parents with kids on a hip and all that. But then I do my breathwork during that, too, and I
also listen to a podcast, and then all of a sudden, I'm learning something. I'm breathing, which I'll count as meditation, too, sometimes, because, let's be real, if we're type A and we're in the middle of a day, meditation is really just reducing thoughts and trying to increase calmness, not actually get enlightened. So all of a sudden, I am doing some level of meditation, breath work, stretching, and learning something. It's the best thing you can possibly do. Or like you said, sunlight. I'll bring my meditation mat out because I get sunlight the first thing in the morning, too. I'll bring my meditation mat out and just sit in the backyard facing the sun and then do some breathwork there.

Katie: I love the tip of putting legs up. I've noticed, for me, that that tends to help me fall asleep more quickly when I do it at night. And it seems like there's some fascinating data on how that's also supportive for the Lymphatic system, because you're allowing anything that's kind of pooling in the legs to drain. That was helpful for me during pregnancy as well. And I didn't know about the low back traction, but it makes sense. So that seems like an easy one that could be habit stacked.

And also for parents listening, I'm curious. I've found that anytime I've been like, oh, I wish my kids wanted to do music lessons, and then realized, oh, actually, I'm doing that because I want to do music, and I never did. I should just do music. And then, ironically, they wanted to once I started. When parents integrate this, it seems to have a great ripple effect, because then the kids become more interested, especially when they're younger. Are a lot of these things, things we can do with our kids to integrate them as a habit and make them part of family culture?

Jeff: Yes, for sure. And my favorite clients were some of my first clients, Doug and Linda, Lisa and Ryan, and their daughter Meredith. And what happened was, Lisa, the parents of Meredith, she came in and started getting pain free, and she was like, you know, my mom is really in a lot of pain. Maybe you can help her. And then Linda came in, and she not only got pain free in five sessions, but also lost 30 pounds over the course of six months. And then her husband came in, and he lost 35 pounds. And then Ryan, the father of Meredith, came in, and he lost weight and got fit. And Meredith, in this time, the five year old, because they started working out at home, she's like, oh, are you guys playing with exercise bones? And that's what she called dumbbells. And she saw them as bones, like a dog bone. And she's like, Are you guys playing with exercise bones? And so they got her little baby weights like little one pounders, and all of a sudden they have this culture that has changed within the family, where instead of 3500 calories on thanksgiving, they're doing the turkey trot in the mornings and they're going for the 5k jog on a holiday instead of just consuming and gaining weight. And it became this beautiful culture where everybody wanted to connect that way. And the daughter felt better and she was more energized at school. Now she's 13 or 14 and the habits still carry over.

It's just this beautiful culture that changes. And like you said, it's like, if we want to be the change, that's going to have a beautiful ripple effect. I have a client who I taught some breathwork meditation and he's like, mornings are the worst. He comes in looking just stressed after dropping his kids off at school. He's like, My kids are bonkers and they're fighting everything. And I'm like, let's trick them into a little bit of breathwork or meditation. And he gave this little competitive challenge about sitting down and breathing with him on the couch and they did that for just 3 minutes. And all of a sudden it's a habit that they cannot miss because the kids love it and it calms them immediately. And they're actually into it. They're inspired to do it. And so now
their mornings are actually peaceful and connecting as opposed to he's just like, can't wait to get them out of the car at school because they've just been little hellraisers in the morning. You can definitely inspire your kids and then it's just capturing those moments. She calls them exercise bones and then they start bringing in yoga because it's got trees and downward dog and they bring in things that complement dog bone type or exercise bones. And then the meditation was huge for that other client. So, yeah, it can become a cultural thing. It's just a little bit of consistency and it goes a long way. Kids see you're serious about it and then they'll follow suit.

Katie: And like I said, I know there's a lot more resources that you have available online. I'll make sure those are all linked. But a couple of questions I love to ask at the end of interviews. The first being if there is a book or number of books that have profoundly impacted your life and if so, what they are and why.

Jeff: Yes, I love this question that you ask on your podcast and the two that I'll say is Healthy at 100, because that has been my mindset even since I was 21, 22 is how can I be upright and active and who I want to be now? And how can I be that when I'm 80? How can I be that when I'm 90? And if I make it to 100, how can I be that when I'm 100. And so this really talks about all the cultures where Centenarians are upright and active and honored in their culture, which is a different topic, but also able to carry water. If they're in an indigenous community able to carry water, they're able to grow their food. And it's possible. But we have this de-evolution of man mindset in America where we get upright, and we get to be full blown adults. And then at some point, we start to hunch forward and at some point, our shoulders are way forward. And then all of a sudden, we're on a walker, and then we're in a wheelchair, and then we're in a nursing home. It's like, that doesn't have to be the norm. So Healthy at 100 shares my mindset in a big way, and it gives a lot of easy it's an easy read, even though it's got great science and information with it, too. And it's really inspiring for all of us to say, okay, how do I be pain free and fit for a lifetime? How do I be the person I've always thought I would be in my 40s, 50s and 60s that maybe some of us aren't right now?

And then the other book that I love is called Factfulness. And the subtitle is Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World and Why Things Are Better Than You May Think or Things Are Better Than You Think. And the reason I love this is because this guy has global experience changing developing countries, changing developed countries, really growing cultures around the world in a constructive way, because we all want to help society in some way. And this guy has found the best ways to do so. That's really cool to see. But also we have this negative bias. Our minds are designed for negative bias. And the classic example is if you're hiking and you see a stick, you think it's a snake, and then you have to work with your prefrontal cortex to say, no, it's a stick, it's okay, it's safe. And so the news does this and everything else. And so Factfulness just outlines some of our instincts that are negatively wired. And then also it just gives how the news isn't necessarily right and how the world is doing. Like, we have more protected land than we've ever had in the history of our world, industrialized, civilized world and everything else. And so it's a very cool study on how the world's in a good place, in a better place than what we think. And it just helps free up our mindset because we can have a lot of guilt if we watch the news for too long or any of that. It's like, no, we're doing okay. And this, reaffirms that, and then we can find the true ways to really give back in society.
Katie: Those are both new recommendations for this podcast. I'll make sure they are linked in the show notes as. Well, and I'm adding them to my reading list also. And lastly, any parting advice that you want to leave with the listeners today that could be related to something we've talked about or entirely unrelated life advice.

Jeff: Thank you. For me, it's always about if I can let go, that's where life begins. And my near death experience was a clear cut example of that. I had to let go, and life provided gratefully. Now it's like if we're nervous about something, we actually do worse. If I'm nervous about coming on this podcast, I'm going to do worse. It's like if I could let go and just relax and enjoy it, we have a better conversation, we have a better connection, and I convey more so the message I want to convey. And so if we can, especially within health and fitness, we start to grip so tightly, like, I need to see three pounds lost in 30 days or else I'm going to be mad. And that whole thing. I say that we take Life hostage, like, give me exactly what I want, or else is we don't realize it, but or else I'm going to be anxious, or else I'm going to be depressed, or else I'm going to be judgmental or critical or whatever it might be.

So if we can relax our grip and just picture that we are creating a masterpiece over time and not every brushstroke is going to be perfect, but we can correct it if we can say, okay, over 50 years. What am I going to create for the next 50 years of my life and not get so held up on each individual brushstroke, but once in a while, Zoom out and be like, how am I doing? That's been one of the biggest lessons for me, is just relax, do my part, let go of the results and quit taking Life hostage. Like I said, the trade off is give me what I want or else it all comes back to me or else I'm going to be unhappy. And it's like, no, thank you. And also, what does today have in store for me?

Katie: I love that. And it loops back to our beginning conversation about dance in public like no one's watching, even on a busy street, or sing out loud. I think of the quote by Naval Ravikant that desire is a contract we make with ourselves to be unhappy until we get what we want and that we can just choose happiness now and still work toward what we're hoping to achieve. But I agree with you completely. I think that's a beautiful place to wrap up for today, but I'm so grateful for your time. This has been such a fun conversation. Thank you so much for being here.

Jeff: Yeah, hey, thank you. You and your audience are amazing. And thank you for the work you're doing. You're really providing great content for everybody.

Katie: Well, thank you. 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.