Episode 685: Back to School Health and Stress Management for the Whole Family
With Tina Anderson
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Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama podcast. I’m Katie from wellnessmama.com. And this episode is with one of my dear personal friends and it’s all about back-to-school health routines and stress management for the whole family. And I’m here with Tina Anderson, who you might have heard from before. I will link to her previous episodes in the show notes, but she is, like I said, a dear personal friend and someone whose work I respect deeply.

Her journey into the health world was pretty unique. She actually began her career as a trial lawyer who specialized in settling cases by bringing both sides together, which is a personal passion of hers. But once she
had kids, she realized that was really high stress for her family. And so she was able to use her legal skills to point her career in a direction as the in-house counsel for a family company in pharmaceuticals. But what she saw there made her change direction again, because she was frustrated by many of the abuses she saw in the pharmaceutical industry. And she turned toward the field of natural health and found her life’s work and purpose.

And she began to research all she could about disease prevention and good health maintenance and got deeply into gut health and how connected the gut is for overall health. And so to share all of this information with the world, she and her husband created a supplement company largely based around probiotics. And they now have a whole line of really impactful supplements that my family takes.

But in this episode, we go deep on the topic of getting ready for back to school. We talk about parenting, mindset, including a fantastic strategy that her dad used that helped shape her positive mindset. We talk about her life mantra that I learned from her. And then we go deep on key factors for good gut health, the biggest myths about probiotics, what to know when looking for a probiotic, how 90% of serotonin is produced in the gut, what psychobiotics are, and so much more. It’s always a joy to talk to Tina. So let’s join her now.

Tina: Thanks, Katie. I'm so excited to be here with you.

Katie: It's always a joy to talk to you. We are very much real life friends and I also consider you like one of the people I go to for advice. You've got kids who are now grown and who you have awesome relationships with. And I love having you as a sounding board and a friend. And I'm glad that today I get to ask you some of those same questions and we get to record it and let others share the conversation as well. So I'm very grateful that you're here.

And for this episode, we wanted to focus on the theme of back to school. I know I'm gearing up for that with my kids right now. A lot of other families probably are as well. And you have at least more than 18 years of experience of this with your kids and their various different ages. So I feel like this is a topic that could be a whole series of episodes both on the physical health side, the mental health side, the stress relief side, the organization, the getting back in a routine. There's so many things we could cover. But to start broad, I would love to hear if you guys had any sort of traditions, routines or anything in your family around the back to school time.

Tina: Yeah, you know, I think what I just have such fond memories of is just the whole going back to school shopping. You know, they loved getting their school supplies when they were little and, you know, we'd always go out for ice cream afterwards and just kind of make it kind of fun, a little tradition. And so, and then we would do, you know, the other fun part was like finding out there's a teacher, you know, when they go back to school and they find out their teacher and it would, it would, we'd all go together and it would be this unveiling. And it was just, it was fun. There was stress involved in it because we're like, oh, what if they don't
get a friend that they want in their class and all that. But it was, it was always, we always tried to make it really fun.

Katie: I love that. I think my experience is a little different with homeschooling, although we do still the school shopping part. But for us, it's like gearing up for the sports and they still have very active social lives, but usually through their activities versus through school. But one thing I know that is a concern for a lot of families is, and especially with younger kids, that back to school phase and reintroducing with a bigger group of people tends to also be sometimes a little bit of an immune system challenge. Plus we have throughout, as we go through the fall, the weather cools down, we're getting less bright light and sunlight, more indoors, more all these things that can sort of build up to kind of take a hit on our immune system.

And so one thing I think about a lot this time of year is we're moving into that is what are some of the things we can proactively do to keep our bodies, our immune systems and our physical health optimal, even while we're putting a lot more inputs into it? So do you have any strategies for that, for keeping our immune system strong, for keeping from getting sick as much as possible as we go back into the school, the school kind of routine?

Tina: Well, I think you hit the nail on the head with not being outside as much and not seeing the brightness and the sunshine. I think we have to be more prescriptive about being outside in the sun and getting a decent amount of sunshine during the day, even in the winter months and the fall months, like you mentioned. I think we are, and these kids are just sitting down all day. In the summer, they're running around, playing, moving their bodies way more than they are during the school year. And I think just trying to get them to be moving more. And I think as parents, we just, I mean, the mistakes I made, I think was with my oldest, especially, I would be like, oh, we got to get good grades and we need to focus on this. And now, now I see so much more clearly and realize that there were so many, there were so many other important things to be focusing on, like getting the sunlight and getting, and not being so stressed, putting so much pressure on our kids with grades and, and how you, you know, what you did on this report and just focusing more on health and wellness. And I think I did that more with my youngest. I was much more in line with trying to get him outside more and being out in nature. So I think that would be one area to start with your immune system, just trying to get some more outside sunshine and be more active because we just become so sedentary when we were back to school.

Katie: That's so true. And you're definitely one of my inspirations in this because I've gotten to travel with you a few times and seen your routine. And you're so good about getting morning sunlight, which I know I've talked about on here so many times and how important that is for our circadian health. And also you are like such an inspiration in going for walks outside. I know we've had conversations where we went for a walk, even in some kind of interesting areas like downtown New Orleans at different times.
But I feel like this is maybe one of many reasons that you are such a ball of energy is that you make time, intentional time for movement and time outside, which it’s funny that we need science to remind us of this, but the studies just keep kind of showing up about why those things are so important. And I feel like you’re such a good example of that.

Tina: Yeah, well, thank you. I loved it. And I would walk my kids to school. I was in a neighborhood that allowed us to do that. And I think that if you can walk your kids to school and you have the flexibility to do it, I was fortunate. I worked from home. I was able to walk them to school, but just getting them started out, walking is so important. I think, and then just, and then, you know, even in high school, you know, a lot of kids are driving going back to high school and it’s, and I just think trying to get them to just be active and move more and just empowering them with that. I think that's the other thing as parents.

I've learned is that you can't just tell them something, you know, you need to show them the research and you have to show, like have them watch a documentary about a topic that you want to teach them about just because that's how they really start to empower themselves and really then they're going to make the changes. They're not going to make the change. They may make the changes temporarily when you tell them, but when, you know, they're empowered by the knowledge and understanding of what's going on in the research, they're going to start making better changes.

Katie: I agree. And that's a recurring theme, I think, when anytime we talk about parenting on this Podcast is also, to your point, the importance of modeling. And I think it's so true that that saying that said in many different ways to many different people, the idea that what we say is important and they'll sometimes listen, but they're going to pay a lot more attention to what we do, even if they pretend they're not or if they try not to, that's what's going to stick in the long-term.

And so I think as moms, especially, like you said, this is what helps us to keep that focus of us modeling the thing is actually the thing that's going to benefit them the most. This is probably why we see that statistic that a mom's exercise and fitness level actually has a dramatic impact on her kids. It's because I think of that modeling and them seeing it, which by us doing it, it actually gives them permission to prioritize it as well. And so I feel like this is one of my core sort of parenting principles is maybe speak less and model more.

Tina: Yes, yeah, I love that. I absolutely agree with you.

Katie: What about any tips for, so my oldest are just now in the teenage years, any tips for keeping good lines of communication and good relationship with your kids as they go through the teenage years and into adulthood? Because I know from interacting with your family, you have an awesome relationship with all of your kids and a very close, both immediate and extended family. And I think that's so beautiful. So any tips for nurturing that?
Tina: Yeah, thank you. I mean, it's what I'm most proud of in my life is my family that we built and the relationship that I have with my kids. And you know, it's so funny, so many people have asked me this. And I think one of the things I remember when my kids were in high school and you know, maybe they weren't engaging in the activities that other people were as far as, you know, maybe the behaviors they weren't supposed to be doing. My kids were like, oh, I don't want to do that.

And, and people would say like, how did you have your kids not do that at that age? And I'm like, I don't, I don't really know other than I just made home a very safe place. Not, not just safe. We all want to make our home safe, but more like comfortable that it's okay that it's Friday night and you're a sophomore in high school and you don't have plans. Like that's okay. Just hang out with us and be at home with us.

And I never, like I would never be like, oh, what are your friends doing? You know, why aren't you going out? And well, can't you find any plans? Or I would always just make it like, oh, what do you, what are we going to do Friday night? What do you want for dinner with, you know, dad and I? And so I would, it was more about, you know, making it normal that they were home with us and not like you have to be follow the social norms of like doing things.

They did plenty of social activities in high school, but you know, they all go through stages where friends maybe start to change and groups start to change. And I just think it's important that we make it normal that hang out with us. And for us, I mean, that's just the way we love hanging out with each other. And I think that was really important. And not being so strict. I think the less strict we are, and I mean, kids need boundaries. I'm a huge proponent of that. I think kids, especially in teenagers, definitely need boundaries, but just, you know, not being so judgmental about maybe they made a mistake and they made a choice that they shouldn't have made, but not judging them all the time and making them feel bad about things. I think that has really helped us be very open about things.

Katie: That's such a great point, especially in those instances where they make a mistake because they're probably going to learn enough from that lesson from having made the mistake and probably be tougher on themselves than we could be. And so I feel like if we can let them keep the ownership of that, not take it away from them by judging them externally and not having to have them justify it and defend, which I think then puts more energy into the action itself. I love that approach.

And I think also you touched on something valuable, which is no matter what age they are, we can't, I forget who said this, but we can't make them and we can't fix them. Like all those things have to come from inside of them. And so if we can view it as how can we support them in these lessons and be the safe place they can learn those lessons without judgment, I think that really helps that relationship. And I also love, it seems like you do this so well in your home, of being the place where not just your kids, but anybody can go and it's a place of unconditional love. And that was what I always really wanted to aim for. And it seems to be playing out with my teenagers is I wanted to be the place where they always felt comfortable having their friends, where everybody was always welcome. I will feed anybody's kid who's in my house and hopefully they always
feel that there's unconditional love there. I think that is like an intangible that we can't put a price on, but one that like hopefully really helps that relationship for our whole lives with our kids.

Tina: Yeah, and I mean, you are a complete model of that. I mean, I remember being over and having all those kids around and just everyone having so much fun and being active. And it is really important to have your home be that way for everyone. I also think like to touch upon grades, I think that's one of the biggest lessons as a parent I learned. I mean, I was so different parenting my oldest than my youngest. And I think we have to just focus on learning. I'm sure you talk about this all the time, Katie, I know you do, but it's like, you know, the grade is not, I just feel like it's almost irrelevant.

You know, I mean, what I focus on, especially my youngest is in college now, I'm like, just focus on learning. I just want you to learn. The grade, your GPA means nothing to me. It means it should mean nothing to you. It's like, and you know, generally when you're learning and you're really focusing on learning, whatever it is, the grades fall into place. But I think we just get so caught up, especially in high school with, you know, studying for, trying to get into colleges and all of the social patterns that we're supposed to follow. I just would caution everybody to just have your focus on learning. Try to get your child to love to learn about whatever topic it is and in whatever manner it is. It doesn't have to be in the classroom. It could be Ted Talks, it could be whatever it is.

Katie: Absolutely. That's a skill that will serve you your whole life and that hopefully all of us as adults are still doing every day in some form. But you're right. I think I didn't learn that lesson until adulthood. I very much was so worried about grades in high school and I think I attached parts of my identity to how well I did in school. And it was a great thing to like un-pattern and like go off later in life. But it's something I've been aware of with my kids of trying to never help or not like kind of facilitate a mindset where they feel like their worth is attached to their performance in any area, whether it's sports, whether it's school, but to focus on the core principles of curiosity and learning and connecting the dots and having fun and overcoming challenges because those are the skills that are going to actually translate into adult life and whatever they end up choosing, which might not be something in the academic field, but those are the more like soft skills that are going to serve them in any aspect of life.

And I think that's a perfect springboard also into the mindset conversation, which is another area where you are definitely a source of inspiration for me. And I know people have heard me say down here, the line I got from you, which is that everything will work out perfectly for me. And you are such a source of positivity and you bring that energy to any group that you are in. And so I would love to hear, I know we've talked about this a little bit in our other podcasts, but what were some of your big sort of sources of inspiration or learning in mindset and in crafting that mindset?

Tina: Yeah, well, thank you, Katie. That's quite a compliment coming from you. So, yeah, mindset is a huge part of my life. My father actually used to wake me up in the morning and tell me I'm getting better and better every day in every way. And it was, it was, and I thought, you know, God, that's so weird that my dad does this all the time. And little did I know what it did for me for my, the rest of my life. And he just taught me about
how I, you know, you create your future, you create your life and it's the words that you use. You should be very careful with the words that you use.

That, you know, I talked to him and I’d say something like, oh my God, I'm crazy. I can't believe I did that. And he'd say, cancel, cancel. Like you don't say that. You know, don't ever call yourself crazy. Like don't say that even if it's just in a joking way. Just taught me the power of words and the energy that you bring to any situation. He used to back in the day, my God, you know, I mean, it was a long time ago. He wanted to have books on tape before books on tape were a thing. So he would have me dictate Wayne Dyer's book into a tape recorder. And I would read about or read Wayne Dyer. And of course I was not paying attention because I was like, I don't care about this, but I think subconsciously that was all ingrained in me.

And so then Wayne Dyer became a huge teacher to me and is the inspiration of our company. It's the inspiration of so many things in my life and the decisions I've made in I do feel that, you know, we really, we need to do our life's work. We need to, we could create our future by the, the, the way we live our life. I think forgiveness is a huge aspect of it. That's one of the cool things that Wayne Dyer talks about a lot. And I've coached other friends and family members on forgiveness that I think they've had life changing results about. I'm not a coach or anything like that. I just, it's just a personal passion of mine.

And I love, yeah, I just think our words are really important and our energy that we bring to any situation is really important. And, and as you know, my famous mantra that I always say is everything works out perfectly for me. And I think what is important about that, people think that's such a bold statement to say, but everything works out perfectly for me just means that it's working out perfectly for me in this situation. And it's not the way I necessarily wanted it to work out, but I know that it's working out perfectly for me. And I have to trust that I have to trust that, you know, the universe is providing for me or God is providing for me.

Katie: Yeah, I have that statement on my wall actually in my bedroom now too. And it's really actually helped me adopt some of that mindset as well. And to your point, it's not that everything works out how I want it to work out, but a lot of us can probably look in hindsight at even things we thought were very difficult during whatever point we were going through them and that we would have not necessarily chosen. But then years later, see how that really shifted the course of our life or provided a lesson that was really necessary for something later on and see that it really did work out perfectly, just not how we thought perfectly was going to look.

And now looking back, I can even look at the hardest moments of my life and have like deep overwhelming gratitude for them. Even though I wouldn't have chosen them, I can see now I wouldn't have gotten to go on some of these journeys I've been on had I not had those experiences. And so that's something I keep top of mind with my kids too, is to hopefully help them have the frame of reference to be present in whatever view it as happening perfectly, even if it's not pleasant or enjoyable all the time, and to look for the lesson or to look for the beauty in it, even when it's something that maybe is difficult or hard.
I also love that you brought up forgiveness. I read the quote years ago that forgiveness is setting the prisoner free and realizing that the prisoner was yourself. And that's really always stayed with me because I think often we think, oh, I can forgive them if they do this, or if only they would apologize, if only they would make it right. And I think those are two separate things. Forgiveness is an internal process that we get to have complete freedom over when we choose. Making amends is a whole separate thing and that does involve the other person. But I think if we can separate the forgiveness piece and realize that we always have the ability to forgive, no matter what the other person does or doesn't do, there's so much freedom in that. And so it sounds like you've helped people reach that point a lot, which is beautiful.

Tina: Yeah, it's amazing. What happens is that it opens up their lives. You know, I have one particular friend who had an issue with his father and all of a sudden he started forgiving his father and all of these other things. His career started taking off. Like his relationships were even better than they were before. So I mean, it's amazing what happens when you forgive and it's so hard. And it's not like I'm saying, oh, forgive one day, you forgive. It's a process. But if you just see that it opens up so much in your own life and as bad as someone has treated you, as horrible as something that someone has done to you, if you could get to a point of forgiveness, you will really start seeing great things happen in your life.

Katie: Yeah, and people have probably heard me talk about this before as well, but for years I was doing all the physical health stuff that I knew how to do and working with all the doctors and had spreadsheets for everything, trying to fix all my physical health problems. And it wasn't until I also addressed that inner emotional side and changed my mindset that all the physical stuff started working. And it really highlighted for me how not only are the mind and body connected and you can't view either one in isolation, but also how powerful the inner work is for even shifting our physical health.

And I think we maybe can all think of examples of someone who just continues to have health problems maybe, but they have a mindset that's sort of like manifesting in their physical health or people like you who have this everything works out perfectly for me mindset and who like seem to be thriving and endless energy. And I think that not always is that a cause and effect relationship, certainly by any means, but that those are really valuable factors to remember it's both/and, not either or when it comes to these things.

Tina: Well, absolutely. And I, you know, I'm obviously interviewed on quite a few podcasts about gut health, and I'm always talking about the fact that we need to meditate, we need to do deep breathing or acupuncture, massage, whatever it is that calms you down. We need to be doing these things to be taking care of our gut health. And then the reverse is true. You know, you need to be taking care of your gut health to send signals back to the brain. And, you know, it's like we have to remember that what's going on mentally is affecting us physically and vice versa. What's going on physically will be affecting us mentally. But they both exactly, they're both working together.

Katie: And you also talked about the words that we say being so important. And I love this point as well. I've tried to pay attention to a lot, especially any words that come after the words I am, because I feel like that's really powerful for what we're telling our brains and our bodies. But I've learned slowly and this was a process...
as well. But the inner talk especially that I had towards myself had a direct impact on my mindset and on my physical health as well. And you mentioned one saying that your dad would use with you. I'm curious if you have any other tips for sort of nurturing a positive mindset toward oneself, because it seems like for many people that's actually the most difficult to overcome. Like we can be kind and how we speak to our kids and our partners and our friends, but sometimes learning to speak kindly to ourselves can be the biggest obstacle.

Tina: Isn't that the truth? I mean, and I work at this every day and I think it's still hard for me, you know, I think one of the things that has helped me is just doing daily morning affirmations. So I have my affirmations and it just sets the day out to start out on a good note and saying words that are affirming the way that you want to live your day and your life.

So I think positive affirmations and the other thing is like I'll find myself beating myself up because I said something like, oh, you know, God, these pants are tight on me. And then I'm like, why am I eating like a pig? Or, you know, I say something like, I'm like, oh my God, Tina, you know better than to talk like that to yourself. And and I'm like, OK, now I can't beat myself up about it either. So I think like recognize that you do. We all do that. We say things that we shouldn't be saying. But I and that's what's helped me is saying, would I say that to my daughter? You know, would I say that to my mom? Would I say that to a friend? And no, I mean, if I'm not going to say it to them, like, by how can I say it to myself? And we have to remind ourselves of that.

But I think saying the morning affirmations is so powerful to start your day out. Just think of something like I am perfect health or I am healthy. I feel good. I look good. Whatever it is that you're working on and how you want to set your intentions for the day. I have several. I change them up. I have one that's like business related, one that's personal related, one that's health related. So whatever it is, I try to use those mantras, some that I've said for probably 10 years. So I think it's just important to words are powerful. And I do believe our subconscious mind absorbs those words. And so be very prescriptive about the words that you say to yourself.

Katie: I love that advice. And I love that we got to get into the mindset side first, because I really do believe, like we've talked about, that this is a really huge key, even when it comes to physical health, and that often it's overlooked or often it feels insurmountable. And I think any, even small baby steps make a huge difference in that area. And so I love that we got to touch on that.

But I know that you also have a ton of expertise in the physical health side and especially in gut health. And I think this is also very important at this time of year in particular, not just because often when people go back to school, their food can change a little bit because a lot of times you're eating at school now or packing lunches, but also because like we talked about, light's changing, your immune system is changing and its inputs at that point, maybe sleep is changing because you've got kids have more homework and they're up later. There's so much going on there.
And it seems like we've heard enough so much from all these studies about gut health being totally linked to all aspects of health, that anything we can do that supports our gut health actually has positive ripple effects into all areas of health, from sleep to stress to of course, digestion to skin and on and on and on. So I know that this is like a life’s work and a passion for you and that you have put in a lot of hours into figuring out the best solutions for gut health.

But I would love for you to start broad and walk us through what are some of the core principles of good gut health, whether it be things that are better to avoid, things that are great to consume, whether it's stress factors, what are the big needle movers when it comes to gut health?

Tina: Well, first of all, I'm so glad that you mentioned that the fact that gut health has to do with virtually every aspect of our overall health. And of course, 80% of our immune system is found in our gut. So we're trying so hard to like ramp up our kids and ourselves, our immune system as we head into fall and winter. And we have to remember, we've got to focus on our gut health because it is literally dictating every aspect, virtually every aspect of our overall health and primarily our immune system. So you are absolutely right to mention that.

So some of the things I think to avoid, you know, unfortunately, the world we live in is so detrimental to our gut bacteria. You know, our gut is comprised of all these beneficial microorganisms, primarily bacteria. And we know that we are living in this world that's so offensive to our gut health. So one of the biggest problems is antibiotics. So we know now to avoid antibiotics and as much as possible, but they're found in animal products, they're found in our food supply. So we have to try to be very aware of the foods that we're consuming that do not have antibiotics in them.

Also with Glyphosate, which is the active ingredient in Roundup, and it's sprayed all over our produce. And that is so detrimental to our gut health. A lot of household and personal care products are very detrimental. A lot of shampoos, toothpaste, which is why I would obviously recommend everybody take, you know, use Wellnesse because I mean, first of all, it's so good for our hair anyway. I love the way it makes my hair feel. My dad now loves it. It's so funny. So I definitely think we have to be mindful of our personal care products, too, because they're just loaded with all of these toxins.

So there's chemicals and toxins all over our, you know, the world that we're living in. And so we really need to be focusing on taking care of our gut health. Unfortunately, the soil that we're eating off of doesn't have a lot of the microbes that we really were used to getting our ancestors used to get. So we, you know, it's good to eat fermented foods. Definitely would recommend fermented foods, just not as a replacement for a quality probiotic. That's where I think the big mistake is made, is people think fermented food is a replacement for a probiotic. It has tons of nutrients. It's very supportive of your gut health, but it's not a replacement for a probiotic. It doesn't because the big... you know, aspect of probiotics, of course, is survivability. And the spore-based probiotic strains that we work with actually, we know survive and get to the intestines alive.
So I would really focus on avoiding, like antibiotics, avoiding Glyphosate, which is the active ingredient in Roundup, and focus on eating organic foods, certainly eating fermented foods, and then taking a high-quality probiotic would be, you know, really supportive of your gut health, and doing things like meditation, walking in nature, being outside, getting in the sunlight. All those things are really important for our gut health.

Katie: And we did a whole episode about this, so I will link to it in the show notes. People can go really deep. But also I feel like there's a lot of myths surrounding probiotics. So I love that you touched on that fermented foods and probiotics, both important but separate, they don't replace each other. We need the fiber and the enzymes and everything that comes with fermented foods. And also there's things specific to probiotics that are not necessarily just going to be in fermented foods. But I feel like there's many more myths beyond that. And many of them are still very common, like things around refrigerated probiotics or what strains are best and if they survive in the gut or not.

And so I would love for you to break down some of those myths as well and talk about the difference between spore based probiotics and other probiotics. Because this was new information to me when I first met you.

Tina: Yeah, so the biggest myth is the refrigeration myth. You know, so many, even doctors will say, oh, in order to be a good probiotic, it needs to be refrigerated. And the reason why they said that was because, you know, you need a live microorganism in order to even be defined as a probiotic. So a probiotics definition is a live microorganism that confers a benefit onto the host, which is the body. So they're thinking, oh, well, in order to be alive, it needs to be in the refrigerator. But when you think about it, if a probiotic strain needs to be alive, to they can't even withstand the room temperature of the store shelf. It needs to be in the refrigerator to stay alive. What in the world will happen when it goes into your body, which is 98.6, much warmer than the room temperature of the store shelf? And the answer is they're gonna die.

And let's say the temperature doesn't even kill them. By the time they get to the stomach, which is very acidic and meant to be the gastric barrier, the majority of strains on the market are just killed off by that temperature, the body temperature, as well as the acid in the stomach. So this idea of a probiotic needing to be refrigerated in order to be a good probiotic is probably one of the biggest myths out there. And it still needs to be debunked. The thing with the strains that we work with, they're actually dormant. They're not live, like in the bottle, they're not alive. They're actually dormant. And then when they get to the intestines, so they make that journey from your throat through the gastric system. And when they get into the intestines, that's when they take their spore shell off. And that's when they start doing the magic in the microbiome.

So we have to remember, a probiotic does not need to be alive in the refrigerator. A probiotic needs to be alive in your intestines. And that's one of the biggest myths. So we really wanna make sure that the probiotic is alive in the intestines.
And then I think one of the other big myths out there is that you need a high count, a high CFU count. So CFU is Colony Forming Units. You'll see that on the front of the bottle. It'll say 50 billion CFUs, 250 billion CFUs. Now you see something with 500 billion CFUs. And there is actually no studies. There are no studies behind showing more is better. In fact, there is studies showing now that like sometimes when you have lots of different strains and lots of different high number of CFU actually could cause some issues and we could go into that later.

But the important thing to know is of those three billion or however many billion CFUs you have at a product, what kind of change are they making in the gut? And one of the first studies we did was something called a gut model study. And we only have three billion CFUs in our product. And we saw a 30% favorable shift in the gut after only two and a half weeks. And this is profound to see that type of a change in such a short amount of time with just three billion CFUs. And so, don't get caught up in the 50 billion, 500 billion. That's really all marketing. And there's really no research behind that.

Katie: That's so good to know. And the thing I loved about this when I learned that was that it meant that now I could get probiotics to my kids much more easily because the refrigerated ones needed to be taken in these very specific conditions and you wanted the kids to swallow them and a lot of my younger ones at the time couldn't swallow pills.

But when I learned about the spore-based ones and how they could survive through the gut and survive at heat, I realized I could mix these into foods, into smoothies, and it was much, much easier to get them for my kids than if they had to swallow a pill only. And so I love that.

And I think you guys have made this even easier now because the gummies just got to my house recently and my little ones are practically addicted to these. But I would guess it's a similar concept because they're stable and can survive all the way to the small intestine. It's fine to chew them. It's fine for them to be in a gummy and they still get digested and assimilated the same way.

Tina: Yep, exactly. Exactly. It's really, that's what's so great about these spores is they're so robust that we actually tested them. You had mentioned we could open them and mix them with food. You could actually bake with them. We tested them up to 455 degrees and they remain completely stable. So you could bake them and whatever if you're making some type of muffin or brownie or something you could do or whatever. As I used to put in my son's piping hot oatmeal. And that's, it's really, nice for kids to be able to have that option.

I mean, a lot of adults don't even like to swallow pills. And then of course the gummy is just, oh my God, that's been really exciting because they taste so good. I mean, they taste really good. So that's been really important. And that's important to us just to have the compliance as far as people taking it. And I think when they taste good, people will take it more often. And so that was more important to us. We waited a long, long time to produce a gummy because we were like, oh, you know, there's some ingredients that aren't as great
as we’d like to be. We like to be super, super clean, but we did the least amount of anything and we were just able to, you know, we want compliance. It’s really important for us to have compliance with taking the product. And that seems to be what the gummy is doing.

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Katie: And another cool thing when it comes to gut health that actually I think ties in and circles back to, back to school as well, is that studies continually are showing that so much of our neurotransmitters are made in our gut, actually, and the gut's referred to as the second brain, and there's so many connections there.
And I know for a lot of moms especially, this is a time of year where there's more stress, more overwhelm, certainly more running kids around, more scheduling. And it turns out that we can actually really use supporting our gut to our advantage when it comes to stress and mental health as well. And you guys have done some pretty fascinating work around specific strains that are tied in here. So I would love for you to explain that because I have been using JustCalm a lot lately, and it seems like it really does make a noticeable difference on stress, but I would love for you to explain why.

Tina: Yeah, so just the gut alone, just taking the spore-based probiotic alone, our signature product is going to help with that because we know 90% of our serotonin is produced in our gut. Dopamine is produced in our gut. GABA, which is the calming hormone, is produced in our gut. So it's so critically important to be focusing on our gut health when we're talking about mental health and our mood. We see this all the time. So many people will maybe come to our product because they have gas or bloating or diarrhea, constipation, whatever it may be, and then they'll say to us, oh my gosh, you know what, like I'm starting to, like, I'm in a better mood. I have more energy. I mean, would this have anything to do with the probiotic? And I'm like, yes. You know, in the pharmaceutical industry, it's like, Side effects include suicidal thoughts, death, all these horrible things. And it's like here side effects include better mood, more energy and better weight management we've even seen.

So we know that the probiotic alone is helping with just the leakiness of the gut. You could go back, like you said, to another episode and we could talk about leaky gut. And we know that when you have a leaky gut, that is the inflammation will start going to many of your different organs, one of which is your brain. And that's part of what causes the issue. But now we've been focusing on the research that you talked about with this strain called Bifidobacterium Longum 1714. And this strain is called a psychobiotic. And a psychobiotic is a probiotic strain that's helping support that gut-brain access. So we know we have this gut brain access. It's the communication superhighway, I like to call it, because the gut is sending signals to the brain and the brain is sending signals to the gut. And we've known this for a long time.

We know when we're excited about something, we get butterflies in our stomach. We know when we're nervous, we start to go to the bathroom. These are all connections, these are all signals going back and forth from the gut to the brain, the brain to the gut.

And so we know that this Bifidobacterium Longum 1714 Strain that's found in our JustCalm product actually has been able, it's been shown in studies to have people have a better perception of stress. So just that ability to handle stress better actually helps bring us more into that theta waves like mindset, so we're more in that flow state. We know that it's actually helping with cognitive function and ability to focus better. So it was some really compelling studies on the 1714 strain.

Katie: That's so fascinating. And of course, the other component that we know that's really well studied here is back to the immune system component and that when our gut health is compromised, our immune health is by nature compromised as well. And it seems like there's a very strong link with inflammation here. And it seems like more and more studies just keep pointing toward the common link between most chronic diseases.
actually being rooted in inflammation in many cases. And so anytime we can benefit our gut health and give it the opportunity to reduce inflammation in the body and to process that more effectively, it seems like it also is gonna have a really positive impact for the gut.

But are there any specific strategies, especially as we move into kind of cold and flu season that also can help support immune health specifically from a gut-focused perspective?

Tina: Yeah, so all the normal things that I talked about, and then we have a IgG product, which is an immunoglobulin G that has been really, really supportive. I mean, it's really supportive of the lining of your gut, really supportive of your immune system. We know that IgG is basically an antibody that helps attack the, any viruses, toxins, things like that, that come in, that our body naturally makes immunoglobulin G. And we know that this IgG product that we have actually gives us 25% more of the IgG in our gut, which is so important because 90% of our immune system is found in our gut. So that's another strategy that we like to use, especially, you know, as you get into the fall and winter months. I personally take it all year long because I think it's such a fricking phenomenal product. But I also, you know, I understand that maybe people might want to just take it, you know, in the fall and winter season, but I would highly recommend that.

And then just is from an immune perspective point of view is just what we just keep talking about, like calming ourselves down because it really does make a difference on how our gut is functioning. We've got to calm ourselves down and we are living in this world that is so, so, everyone's stressed out. It's like almost like, you know, you get an award for being more stressed out and being busier. And I don't want, we talk about modeling for our kids. We can't model that to our kids. We have got to, you know, show them that we have so much success and happiness when we are just not stressed out all the time and we don't have to do everything and be everything to everyone. So, and I know it's hard as a mom and a young mom. And I just, I wish someone had told me that when I kids were little, just to, you know, cut, give yourself grace, go slow, nothing, everything doesn't have to be perfect and just, you know, focus on your, your mental health too.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. That's so important. And this is purely anecdotal, so not medical advice. But with one of my daughters, I noticed that the combination of IgG and the probiotic seems to really help. Actually, she had some recurring eczema when she was younger, and that seemed to help her body really clear that. And she doesn't have it at all anymore. So I don't know if there's anything specific to that in the studies, but in her case, that seemed to be sort of like the magic thing that helped her eczema for anybody out there who might have eczema with their kids.

Tina: Yeah, well, it's all about the leakiness of the gut. With the probiotic alone, we know we have a double-blind human clinical trial on leaky gut that's been really supportive of the gut health, that we know that's supporting the gut, the barrier and the intestinal barrier. And now we know that the IgG product is further support of that barrier. And just getting rid, I mean, just keeping those toxins from seeping into our bloodstream is really important when people are dealing with autoimmune issues, when they're dealing with allergies. We need to seal up that intestinal barrier. I can't overstate that enough. And those two products are just such, such huge tools in your toolbox.
Katie: And I know as someone who’s a busy business owner and a mom and everything else that you have on your plate, but you managed to stay, like I said, so energetic and in good health. So on a personal level, I would love any tips from you that are kind of your own personal 80-20, whether it be daily habits, daily supplements, anything that you do as part of a routine that you feel like contributes to that.

Tina: Yeah, so I wake up every morning and I do my affirmations. I meditate and then I go for my morning walk that I love so much. Even in the winter, I’m from Chicago and I still will go in the winter and I will, you know, walk and just get outside in nature. And I even love the snow in the winter. So I’m a huge supplement taker. Obviously I take our Just Thrive Probiotic, our IgG, K2, our Prebiotic. I take all of our products pretty much because we don't launch anything that I don't completely agree with or that's not researched and based in science. That's been very important to us.

I also take Brocelite, a Cell Chlorophane Supplement, and I take Vitamin D, Vitamin C, Fish Oil. What else do I take? I take a lot. I'm trying to think of what else I'd, I just, I take so many, but I'm just, I'm huge. I just believe that our soil is so depleted. It doesn't have the nutrients that we want to be taking.

And then of course I've been focusing on gut health because everything else that you're trying to absorb is going to be absorbed that much better when your gut is healthy. And I think that's what we have to remember. We have so much inflammation going on in our gut. And if it's inflamed, it's not absorbing nutrients. So it's really important that I think people start with their gut health and then otherwise all these other supplements and all these other healthy foods that we're eating are not really working.

I also am a huge fan of intermittent fasting. I think that people should do it if they think it works for them. But for me, it works great. I did it, I was motivated. I know so many people were motivated by it to lose weight. I was motivated by it because of the research, how it helped the research in gut health. It's very supportive of your gut health. We know that certain bacteria actually proliferate in a starved state. So I'll do intermittent fasting and I usually just do like a 14 to 16 hour fast, but whatever works for you. But we do know that there's research behind that.

Katie: I agree. And I know it's gotten, there's somewhat like controversy, especially around women and fasting, but I always kind of put intermittent fasting or time-restricted eating in a separate category because this is historically something we've always done in some form and we're certainly not eating while we're sleeping. So all of us are actually doing some form of intermittent fasting anyway. It's just experimenting with the timeline of that. And to your point, I think it is very individual and it is always worth being your own primary healthcare provider and doing the experimentation to figure out what's going to work for you.

For me, after a lot of experimentation, I realized I feel great on a time-restricted schedule, especially if I shift it earlier in the day. That really tends to help with circadian biology. So I try to get morning sunlight as soon as
possible after waking up. And then I try to eat in a more forward shifted window in the day. So I'll eat a really nutrient dense breakfast with protein relatively soon after waking up. And then I'll try to stop eating for sure by sunset, but often by like 5 PM. And I've noticed that my sleep improves when I shift that eating window earlier.

And I only say that because I think a lot of the initial intermittent fasting advice was from guys and their biology works a little different. And a lot of them would skip breakfast and eat it like one or two in the afternoon and then eat till eight o'clock at night, which certainly works for some people. But as a woman, I've noticed for me that earlier window tends to work better. So if someone's experimenting and not seeing good results, that would be one suggestion I would have is shift the window earlier and see if that makes a difference for you.

Tina: Yeah, I love that. I don't do it that way. So I might have to give that a try. But I love to feel, you're absolutely right though about the, you know, even if you just stop eating earlier and you go to bed and then you just, exactly 12 hours is not that difficult to do and you're, you know, just start eating a little bit earlier.

Katie: Absolutely. And that's like, again, back to that sort of positive feedback loop of stress and sleep and gut health and all of these factors. The great thing is if they're not working for you, they can kind of become a negative feedback loop. But if you even make positive baby steps in any of those, it turns into a positive feedback loop and they build on each other. So then energy gets better. It's easier to commit to doing the things you know you want to do. You can make these habits more consistent and then you continue to build that energy and that motivation. So I love that we've gotten to cover so many of the aspects of that positive feedback loop today.

And a few questions I also love to ask toward the end of interviews. I know I've asked you these before, but I'm curious if you have any, whether it be new book recommendations or recent books that have had a positive impact on you and if so, what they are and why.

Tina: Yeah, it's funny because I always go back to the Four Agreements because I know it's been used so often, but I read it so often and I just gave it to a young family friend who is a young man who's going off to college and he said, Mrs. Anderson, oh my God, I just read this book and it really made such a difference and you know, I'm really enjoying it. And I just, I have to mention it again, because I do think it's worth rereading if people haven't read it because it really has made a big difference in my life.

And I talked about Wayne Dyer and one of his books, he's got so many great books, but one of the ones that I can see clearly now is really, really good. And that's probably where I learned the most about forgiveness. And I just think it's really great for anyone that's maybe struggling with forgiveness. His, and just his life story, it's basically like a life story and how you could see so much clearer, you know, years later and how it makes such an impact on your life to like, forgive and be careful with the words that you choose. And yeah, those are some books that really have been impactful to me and I reread them all the time.
Katie: I will include links to those in the show notes for you guys listening on the go. All of that is always at wellnessmama.fm along with links to all of the products you guys carry. And I believe there's also a special discount from you guys that will be in the show notes as well. And lastly, any parting advice for the listeners today that could be related to motherhood or gut health or mindset or any of the things we’ve talked about or entirely unrelated life advice.

Tina: Yeah, you know what I would say, just because we were talking about kids, I think, just spend time with your kids. I think that's probably one of the biggest things that has impacted my relationship and my husband's relationship with our kids is just the fact that we are spending a lot of time, we've, we spent a lot of time with them and it's those little, those moments of windshield time, which we, a friend of ours coined so eloquently, you know, just you’re thinking like, oh, if you're driving them here and there, you're not really spending, it's not quality time. Believe me, that's sometimes the most quality time you get is driving them back and forth to activities. They start to talk more. So just enjoy those times with them and be grateful for them because they go by so fast. As you know, how sad I've been that my kids have gotten older.

Katie: It does go by so fast. I think my oldest one, turning 16, was a big, like a kind of lightning bolt moment for me of realizing just how little time I would have left with him still at home. And so, yeah, I love that advice. I think that's a perfect place to wrap up for today. And Tina, it's always such a joy to talk to you. I'm so glad that we got to catch up and that we got to record it today. Thank you so much for your time.

Tina: Thank you, Katie. Always a wonderful pleasure to talk to you.

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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