

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 80: What Your Monthly Cycle Reveals
About Your Hormones With Alisa Vitti

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

Katie: This podcast is brought to you by the Kids Cook Real Food course. And you may have heard me talk about this before because I love it so much. It's made by one of my good friends, Katie of Kitchen Stewardship, and it's one of my favorite bonding activities I've ever done with my kids. Basically it's a course--Katie is a teacher by trade--so the course is incredible. It's all these videos that teach children of all ages how to cook, starting with the most basic skills all the way up to advanced skills. So my little ones love things like slicing soft fruits and vegetables or spreading things and my older ones love that they now have great knife skills and can make entire meals from scratch.

If you want to check it out, you can go to kidscookrealfood.com/wellness. There will be a special offer for Wellness Mama listeners, so keep an eye out for that. And I would highly encourage any of you, if your kids are not already amazing chefs in the kitchen and you would like them to be a little bit more helpful but also to instill a love of learning and a love of real food in them, I highly recommend the course. I can't recommend it highly enough. And every friend that I've either given it to or encouraged to get it has absolutely loved it. So again, check it out, kidscookrealfood.com/wellness.

This episode is brought to you by Morrocco Method Hair Care. If you haven't heard of them they're a great, completely natural hair care line. And they're totally different than any shampoo you've probably tried in the past. Instead of harsh detergents that actually strip out your hair's natural oils, they help encourage healthy hair and scalp over time after a short detox period by encouraging the actual growth of the hair and the strength of the hair without the need for chemical products. So, you can check them out at morroccomethod.com/wellnessmamahair. And if you use the code WellnessHair, you can get 15% off. Again, that's morroccomethod.com/wellnessmamahair.

Welcome to the Healthy Moms Podcast, I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. And today I'm here with a friend and amazing expert, Alisa Vitti, who is a functional nutritionist, she's a hormone expert, she's a best-selling author, she wrote a book called "The Woman Code", which is really helpful for women in hormones. And she's the founder of froliving.com, which is a great resource online for anybody who's struggling with period questions, fertility questions, or pre or post-menopause questions. She's considered one of the top experts in this field and has all kinds of tools geared towards helping women understand their hormones.

She's a graduate of Johns Hopkins and the Institute for Integrative Nutrition and she's been featured everywhere from Dr. Oz, to CBS, to Fox, to [mindbodygreen](http://mindbodygreen.com) and [Huffington Post](http://HuffingtonPost.com). She's even served on the Yahoo Health Advisory Board and she's a member of the Well and Good Wellness Council and she's also talked to almost every group on the planet about hormones. She's amazing and I'm excited to have her here to talk to us about hormones. So welcome, Alisa.

Alisa: Hi, I'm so happy to be back on your show.

Katie: It's gonna be so fun. And yeah, let's just jump right in because I think you have so much wisdom that you can share with women. And it seems like a lot of women, especially now, are struggling with hormone-related problems. I get so many questions about this and I have a post related to hormone balance. And it gets a lot of traffic right now, which tells me a lot of women are struggling with that. So what are you seeing? What are women struggling with the most right now with their hormones, and why do you think that is?

Alisa: Well, I love that post on your blog by the way, I think it's so good.

Katie: Thanks.

Alisa: I think it's so helpful for women to have resources like this because isn't it just interesting that like we comprise more than 50% of the population but yet there's just not excellent, easy-to-find resources. You know, if people don't know about your site or my site, they're kind of like walking around in the dark with what do they do if they have period problems. And there are so many women with these issues these days and I think it's becoming more of a problem. I know you've talked about this at length on your site about the endocrine-disruptive chemicals that we're exposed to.

In my opinion, one of the biggest reasons why we're seeing more and more women struggling with hormonal issues but it's even...it goes even as deep as to like our ex, our new longer time in front of screens with the blue light, which you know, again, we both love talking about this. But the more we're exposed to that blue light, the less melatonin we're producing. And that's a master regulating hormone in the endocrine system which can affect thyroid function and adrenal function and can really throw off your cycle. Those are all connected.

So there's lots of ways in which our modern lifestyle, high stress, high chemical exposure, no good sleep, just those things alone are really very disruptive for a woman's hormonal pattern. We see younger and younger girls entering what is called precocious puberty, young teens having lots of symptoms around their period well before their 18th birthday, more and more women on the pill. And then that translates to in 20s and 30s, women struggling to conceive, which is the whole design of the reproductive system is to have that be an effortless process. And the fact that many, many couples are struggling with that is indicative that there's just so much that's working against our bodies, making our bodies function challenged. And it's a real concern and I think everybody should be looking at what are the ways that I can mitigate, improve, limit the exposure to these things that might be harming my body and my fertility and my hormonal balance overall?

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. Definitely a topic I'm passionate about as well. And I think the consensus among most women is pretty general that periods aren't a fun thing to begin with. But they're especially not fun if you have cramps or really bad, heavy periods, or things that are making it even more uncomfortable. So you have so many resources for that. But let's talk about, can you fix your periods naturally and what are some of the successes you've had with women in doing this?

Alisa: Yeah, let's start with the mythology piece of that statement and question, you know, that we do walk around with an assumption that our periods should be kind of a miserable experience. And not just an assumption for the majority of us because of all the things we just mentioned and why our endocrine systems are sort of under attack, that we do experience a lot of symptoms, cramping and bloating and acne and mood swings. And that's just PMS, a condition of PMS, but then of course you can have a condition like I used to have, polycystic ovarian syndrome, or you could have fibroids, or you could have endometriosis. And that just makes...it just compounds the suffering, you know, around the cycle.

But the science, the design, the biochemical design of your body is set up in such a way that you're not actually designed to have any symptoms or any kind of suffering whatsoever. For example, here's a myth that I love to bust anywhere I go to talk about periods. So, okay, this is the cramp one, okay? So most of us believe that cramps are part of the deal. Anytime it's time to start having the cycle, the bleed, we're gonna have cramps. Now, if that were true, the hormones that govern uterine contraction, would be greater than or there would be more of them than the hormones that govern uterine relaxation, right? Would make sense. If cramps were a part of our destiny, we would have more uterine-contracting hormones than we would have uterine-relaxing hormones.

But in fact, we have the opposite. We have twice as many uterine-relaxation hormones than we have the hormones that govern uterine contraction. We only have one prostaglandin that stimulates uterine contraction, PGE2. And we have two, PGE1 and PGE3. Like a beautiful, happy, non-cramping sandwich, PGE1 and PGE3, those control uterine relaxation. So by design, you are supposed to have uterine stimulation to help the lining

be shed but it's not designed to be painful.

Now, why do you have cramps if this is the design by nature? And this is the science of your body. You have cramps because you are eating fats that kick off greater production of PGE2. That's it. So if you change the fats that you're eating...by the way, what are those fats? Of course that's the natural next question, things like canola oil. They're like one of the worst things a woman could eat, canola oil. So endocrine-disruptive. And definitely will stimulate you to have more PGE2, and thereby making you have more cramps every time you bleed. If you change that and you eliminate the canola oil, and stop eating the packaged foods that are replete with that kind of processed oil, and do more of the coconut oil and avocado oil and all that kind of thing, olive oil, you will make more PGE1 and PGE3 as you are designed to do. And you will not have any cramps. Period.

Katie: That's certainly encouraging, that's awesome. I know...I think this is finally becoming pretty good knowledge. I think a past guest, Cate Shanahan, Dr. Cate Shanahan, calls vegetable oils like the smoking gun of our time and how terrible they are for you. But I never heard it connected so well to the hormone side. So that's really interesting.

Alisa: Right. I mean, and I just love kind of breaking it...like the thing that keeps us disempowered around our hormones and our interaction with our cycle is that we are not taught the science from the beginning. I mean, I remember my sex ed class in sixth grade, it was...it was not sufficient, let me be kind about it. You know, it was like, here's a bag of maxi pads and don't have sex and good luck. And the rest, where do we get the rest? We get the rest in like magazines and from relationships. And there wasn't a lot of information about what is happening, what is so exciting and magical about the cycle and how it is really something...it can provide you with a framework to really bio hack your body in a way for optimal health and wellbeing.

But when we're kind of taught from the beginning that it's just mysterious, unpredictable, and something that you should like interact with as little as possible and hopefully ignore most of the time, you know, the relationship that you have with your body from day one of puberty becomes very dysfunctional. And you can carry that into your adult womanhood, and it can cause a lot of issues with self-care, and of course exacerbates symptoms that you might have. So that I would say, and sort of the second half of your question is one of the things that I think is a revelation for women. We teach them how the cycle works, what are the hormones involved. And then that they can change it for the better, that you can with food improve any symptom that you have.

I was told when I finally discovered for myself some research that pointed to me that I had polycystic ovarian syndrome, because I had gone undiagnosed for about seven years despite repeated visits to the GYN, and different GYNs. And this was 20 years ago before it was more of a mainstream investigation at the doctor's office. The solution that was presented to me was basically, we're just gonna have to medicate you along the way and there's nothing that we can do to really fix what's wrong with you. And there'll be all sorts of symptoms that go along with this--and this is true not just for PCOS but other hormonal imbalances where you can have difficulty with metabolism and weight. So things like fibroids and endometriosis and fibroid issues and adrenal issues, all these affect the entire endocrine function. So it can be increasing your exposure and risk for obesity and diabetes and heart disease and cancer and infertility. And that was a really scary thing to hear. And it was even worse to hear that there was no treatment, no cure. And I became really passionate about finding a way to get better, obviously.

And you know, 17 years of personally living according to the FLO protocol that I teach to women in my book and at my center, you know, resulted in me being able to conceive my first child naturally when I was told at 20 that that may never happen, you know, or even with IVF. And that's the result, the possibility of what you can shift in your body to bring back cycles that are missing, to reduce the pain and the symptoms around PMS, to restore your fertility, you know, all those things are possible if you commit to having a healthy relationship with your hormones, one that requires you to shift your diet and your lifestyle a little bit.

Katie: Yeah, that makes perfect sense. And I love, you talk about...in "The Woman Code" you talk about the

phases of a woman's cycle. And I want to delve into this a little bit more, because I remember seeing charts one time of the hormone changes between men and women. And for men it was like, you know, pretty even keel most of the month. Like there'd be a slight variation depending on exercise or whatever but pretty much the same. And then women it was literally like a roller coaster between progesterone and estrogen and follicle-stimulating hormone and gluttonizing hormone. So like hormone changes during your cycle are very real but I love how you kind of tie in that it doesn't have to be a bad thing. In fact, you make it a good thing. So let's talk about that. How do you use your cycle to organize your life and to improve your life?

Alisa: Well, let's start with the boys for a minute. Because I think this is a big issue, that we live in a male-oriented society--I could say that perhaps--and what do I mean by that? Meaning simply that a lot of the way that we organize our day and even our concept of time management--on a business level and in so many different ways--even the majority of research that's done in a lab, a lot of that is predicated on the male biochemical circadian pattern, which is a 24-hour cycle. Okay?

So that means every night while they sleep--which is exactly why it looks the same throughout the month, because it's a 24-hour cycle--they have a fluctuating testosterone and cortisol conversation. They do also have estrogen. But they get the biggest surge in the morning. While they're sleeping, men make all this testosterone and then they wake up with a surge of testosterone and cortisol, which everyone does in the morning. And then that starts to slowly over time diminish till the end of the day where their estrogen is higher than their testosterone. And that's when they're sort of more moody and less...and more introverted and less interested in socializing or having sex and they wanna go to bed. Shut their brain off and go to bed, right? So this is like...they have a definite pattern in their 24-hour cycle. And it's the same every day. For any of you who have watched that movie, "Groundhog Day", it's like so exactly what it is for men.

Now, the challenge is that--and this is something that I experienced as well--I remember being such a...you know, I don't know, conscientious young woman and I thought, I would love to be better at time management. And I remember getting like Franklin Covey and Tony Robbins and all...any time management system I could get. And I would really go at it so hard and try really hard to do my best to follow the game plan that they had laid out. And I might be good for a week or two but then something would shift and I didn't know ever what it was at that time because this is when I was like 18 or 19. And I just said, well I can't...I started not being able to follow the plan that was laid out and I had no idea what was wrong with me. And I started feeling very self-critical, like oh, I'm such a failure, I can't do the time management system and I'll never succeed because I can't do the time management system and da-da-da-da.

So I really just abandoned the whole idea. And then it was really such a joyful discovery in my research later on--which I was never looking to discover, but it was just sort of slapped me in the face as I was working on hormones and the cycle--that just like men have this 24-hour cyclical pattern that...and we all know. I mean, how many biohacking podcasts are there that are really like male-oriented that are really all about how do you optimize your energy and mental focus through that 24-hour period because they really do have to try to do that. They only have that 24-hour period and anything that they can do to extend energy and mental focus, given how short of a window they have with it, is to their benefit.

But we too as women have our own unique biochemical circadian pattern, it just happens to be 28 days. And we have four distinct weeks that have four distinct hormonal ratios that govern our cognitive and physiological experiences. I mean, there's some research that indicates that your brain is actually distinct by 25% each of these weeks because the hormonal levels are fluctuating so dramatically each week. And bathing your brain in a different concentration of estrogen and progesterone and testosterone each week and stimulating different centers of the brain.

So you are in fact right to think to yourself, jeez, I feel different this week. The things I wanted to do last week I might not wanna do this week or I don't feel like doing the same kind of work that I did last week but I feel like I should because that's what I'm supposed to do. That's what is being marketed to me, like I should have the same energy every day, all day. But I think that's all being predicated on the construct of the 24-hour male

circadian pattern, and I think we as women need a different conversation. And why? Because you can only get so far.

In my experience working with women now for 15 years in my practice all over the world, you can only...and even in myself, you can only get so far with let's say simply a healing and recovering protocol. Right? So your adrenals are shot and you're gonna do all this adrenal-supportive work and everything that you need to shore up the adrenals. Okay, then you bring them back to homeostasis. Well now what do you do to make sure that you don't run yourself back into the same hole? Right? You can't just continuously take the same supplement protocol to heal the adrenals once they're healed. What do you do? How can you move into a lifestyle that honors the circadian functioning of your body, the hormonal patterns that are intrinsic to your female cycle?

Well, this is why I started looking to the cycle to say, well can it...how can it guide us to come up with a maintenance sort of plan to give us clues about what kinds of foods we should eat, what kinds of exercise that are optimal for each week, what kinds of things are easiest for me to focus on at work in a given week based on my hormonal patterns? And the Cycle Syncing method was born out of this investigation. So that's...I mean, I'm happy to break it down but I'm curious as to how that lands for you, Katie.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. Let's go a little bit deeper because you have this, it's called the Cycle Syncing protocol, right? Which is basically a whole lifestyle system, in the span of a month like you just talked about, helps you to eat and move and live according to what's gonna support your hormones best. But can you give me a little more detail about that?

Alisa: Yeah. So for example, in the...you know, and we can go through each phase of the cycle. But in the ovulatory week, right, we have the biggest dose of estrogen in the shortest amount of time that we're going to have at any point in the cycle, coupled with a surge of testosterone and follicular-stimulating hormone. So ovulatory phase is a really interesting phase. This particular cocktail and combination of hormones stimulates the verbal and social centers of the brain. And it also has implications on energy levels and mood. So what does that mean? That means it translates into a couple of things.

When I was on Dr. Oz, we broke down the foods that were best for each phase. And in the ovulatory phase, because you have all this estrogen--and some of you who are listening may have some estrogen dominance to begin with and are struggling with symptoms like acne and bloating and what-not and you may find that mid-cycle you get a little relapse into some of those estrogen dominant symptoms--this is a great time to help your body metabolize estrogen as quickly as possible, to lean into more raw foods, right?

So leafy green veggies. And we're talking about four or five days that you're doing this, right? And it's not a hundred percent of the time, it's that during these four or five days you might have a green juice. I don't have green juice every day, for example, I only have my green juices and things like that, the more raw food type foods, I have that only during my ovulation days when my body can best handle it, because this is...this gets into a whole Chinese medicine conversation. But also because my body can utilize all of those micronutrients to help my liver break down that estrogen as efficiently as possible. So that's one example.

But also that week during ovulation I might schedule, oh, I don't know, lots of social meetings. You know, where I tend to work from home right now because I'm still a new mom, newish mom, and I'm trying to kind of find my footing with balancing work and life. But during the ovulation week, I definitely will make sure that I'm out having meetings out in the world. And that's really fun and pleasurable for me. But the week before my cycle starts, my bleed starts, that's a different time altogether. Let's talk about the luteal phase, which is the most I would say misaligned phase of the cycle.

This is the phase of the cycle that has two distinct parts. It has the build of estrogen and progesterone and then it has--if conception has not taken place--then it has the slow retreat of estrogen and progesterone. In the first half of that five to six days of that, estrogen-progesterone building, you'll feel really, really good. Really productive, really focused. And also towards the end of that five to six days, you should still feel the same, that

nesting energy of getting things done, making sure everything is complete.

If you have a hormonal imbalance, where you have not enough progesterone and more estrogen for example, this is why this luteal phase gets the bad rap. Because when there's more estrogen to progesterone, we get those symptoms of PMS that we think are part of the deal with our period. But it is not, you don't have to have PMS at all ever. In fact the NIH released a really important study a long time ago, about 10 years ago, called the BioCycle Study in which it concluded that unaddressed PMS in your 20s and 30s will lead to an increase of risk for dementia, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes postmenopausally.

So this hormonal imbalance is not just something to joke about with your friends like, oh, I've got the PMS. You know? But really it's an opportunity for us to say, okay, something about my food and my lifestyle is not aligning with and optimizing this phase. So what do we do during this phase to optimize? You know, we make sure that we're having foods that are rich in vitamin Bs to help promote the production of progesterone, we have a lot of cooked leafy green vegetables to help offset the estrogen levels. And we want to make sure that we're eating for maximum energy because some women can tend to feel more tired during this phase. And so this is again why eating grains, if you're going to eat grains at all or sweet root vegetables, can be a really good time of the month to do that.

You know, there's different things to do and focus on. And I sort of talk through four or five different categories of things to focus on each week from what to prioritize at work, what kinds of foods to eat, what kind of exercise to do, even what kind of foreplay to have in your relationship to optimize your enjoyment of things, because that does shift as well over the course of your cycle. So there's just such a...it's such a rich matrix of a structure that allows us to really navigate our best choices for self-care in any given moment.

Because I don't know about you, Katie. I mean, I was just sharing with you before we started the call that I think you should be given a commendation as a mom. And I only have one kid and you inspire me every day. But I know that in these two years since becoming a mom, I think it's so easy to get into overwhelm about all the things I could be doing for my self-care, you know? Like I could be doing this and I could be going to this class or I could be cooking this. And it just starts to become like white noise, you know? That there's so much I can do, let me add it to my list, right?

And I've been really grateful that I can come back to this practice of cycle syncing because then I can take off the overwhelm and say, okay, well this week, these are the ideal things that I can focus on. And if I can only get to one...if I can only make one big batch of food for myself on Sunday, then I'm gonna focus it for the follicular week because that's where I'm at. I'm not gonna worry about all the green raw stuff this week, I'll get to that next week. If I'm gonna do one workout this week or one workout type this week, I'm gonna do this one. You know, I'm gonna do my cardio during my follicular week and then when I feel more energized, I'm gonna do my high-intensity interval training during my ovulatory week. And kind of continue to just allow myself to be guided by what my body is ideally suited for each week. And I find that it really takes the overwhelm out of this non-stop mental to-do list that I think a lot of us moms struggle with.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. I think we do, we put a lot of pressure on ourselves and there's a lot of overwhelm. And I love that you take that pressure off by optimizing the different parts of the cycle. I've personally tracked my cycle for years, since that's how we space our children. And I find it really fascinating, everything you can learn from doing that. But I love that you tie it into diet and lifestyle. You're the only person I've ever seen who makes that so easy in such a clear picture.

So I wanna--if it's okay--go through a couple of maybe...I know questions I'm gonna hear from readers. So we talked about in the 28-day cycle, a lot of readers maybe like you have had a baby in the past couple of years. So what about in the postpartum and nursing phase, how are hormones different then? Especially before you get your cycle back and how do you support that?

Alisa: Oh, I love this conversation. So it is totally different. The fourth trimester especially, those first three

months postpartum is a very special time for your body that should be focused on replenishing micronutrients from the pregnancy and the birth experience. And there's an excellent cookbook that I think is...does a really great job of talking about these types of very special foods and how to prepare them. It's called "The First Forty Days", and...so for example, during the fourth trimester, to not only heal from pregnancy and labor but also to ensure milk supply and protect my hormones from going awry, you know, so many women, I think it's one in seven women will struggle with fibroiditis of some type postpartum because I think there can be a lot of micronutrient depletion that's never resolved. And that kind of starts to compound alongside sleep deprivation and rising stress levels and the whole dance that is new motherhood.

So this is a really important time to protect the body and prepare for good hormonal balance. And so, you know, fourth trimester I was drinking my bone broth religiously and eating organic chicken liver daily that I had made into like a pâté with apples. And red meats and lots of fats, saturated fats and avocado every day, coconut oil every day, just really as nourishing, warming foods as possible, golden milk with the drying, warming turmeric spice is so good postpartum. So really that's a very specific time and all of those foods that are good for your hormonal balance are excellent for stabilizing milk production.

You know, another...for those of you who have PCOS, some of you may know that women with PCOS have a harder time establishing milk supply and milk flow. And a lot of women with PCOS, although they're able to get pregnant and have a healthy pregnancy with the right treatment, will have difficulty having breastfeeding be part of their postpartum experience. And I don't take it for granted that I've been able to keep myself hormonally balanced or restore my hormonal balance in general but also postpartum so that I've been able to continuously breastfeed for two-and-a-half years at this point.

And I think a lot of what we do postpartum is so critical to our...not just our breastfeeding supply but also how we start to go through perimenopause, you know? We wanna basically think about if making a baby is this hugely nutrient-demanding experience on our bodies, we wanna really be thinking about how can we just always be putting more into the bank so we're never running out of deficit as we start to approach 35 and over and all of the things that will happen to us in that perimenopausal journey. Because just like PMS is not something that you should expect to suffer with, perimenopause should also be a pretty easy, smooth-sailing process as well.

Katie: That will be encouraging I'm sure to a lot of people.

This podcast is brought to you by the Kids Cook Real Food course. And you may have heard me talk about this before because I love it so much. It's made by one of my good friends, Katie of Kitchen Stewardship. And it's one of my favorite bonding activities I've ever done with my kids. Basically it's a course--Katie is a teacher by trade--so the course is incredible. It's all these videos that teach children of all ages how to cook, starting with the most basic skills all the way up to advanced skills. So my little ones love things like slicing soft fruits and vegetables or spreading things. And my older ones love that they now have great knife skills and can make entire meals from scratch.

If you want to check it out, you can go to kidscookrealfood.com/wellness. There will be a special offer for Wellness Mama listeners, so keep an eye out for that. And I would highly encourage any of you, if your kids are not already amazing chefs in the kitchen and you would like them to be a little bit more helpful but also to instill a love of learning and a love of real food in them, I highly recommend the course. I can't recommend it highly enough. And every friend that I've either given it to or encouraged to get it has absolutely loved it. So again, check it out, kidscookrealfood.com/wellness.

This episode is brought to you by Morrocco Method. And as I mentioned before, they're a great natural hair care line. They have a variety of products for pretty much every hair type. And I wanted to give you a little bit of a low down in case you decide to try them because they are not your normal shampoo. They're not gonna lather and strip oil from your hair like your shampoo that you're used to. And they don't have a lot of chemical fragrances and perfumes. So they're gonna smell a little different too. But here's their advantage over time.

They will essentially detox your hair, similar to my mud detox that I have a blog post about. They will pull all the chemicals and build up from other products out of your hair, and over time encourage naturally healthy hair, that in my experience grows easier, faster and thicker. So if you wanna check them out, they have an entire line of shampoos, dry shampoo, conditioners, and even a Zen hair detox. You can check them out at morroccomethod.com/wellnessmamahair. That's M-O-R-R-O-C-C-O method.com/wellnessmamahair. And make sure you use the code WellnessHair for 15% off.

Katie: We just talked about the pregnancy and nursing or at least the nursing and postpartum side. There's definitely also gonna be a group of women listening who probably desperately wish they could be in the postpartum days and could have a baby. So talk a little bit about...because I know you've been through it especially, those with infertility or in an irregular cycle or something like PCOS, how can they work toward getting that hormone balance to begin with?

Alisa: So, I mean, keep in mind that I did not menstruate for a decade. So this is like...if this is going on for you, I just wanna start by saying that I did not get my period for a full decade before I figured out how to get my hormones back in balance. And no one was able to help me restore my cycle. What was able to help me restore my cycle was this whole protocol and the cycle syncing lifestyle.

So a lot of women will find that they are feeling like they're mostly there hormonally but they're not able to get their cycle regulated. And we have them do this cyclical eating and exercise plan and it is the missing piece for them that takes them out of, you know, sort of this, well, some months I get it 30 days, some months it's 35, I'm not quite sure when I'm gonna ovulate. There's something about aligning with these patterns, even when you don't yet have them well established, that helps the body be more efficient and to do things in the right spacing.

So I would encourage you if you do struggle with a little bit of cycle irregularity...or even if you're missing your cycle. We have women simply who have--like me--who didn't have a cycle for years and years, we have them simply start the cycle syncing in alignment with the lunar calendar, just as a way to have a point to orient. But if you could really just start on a Monday or a Sunday and just say, okay, this is my follicular phase. If you're not sure where you are, you can just start where ever you think you want to start and then start to go through the cycle syncing process. And you will start to feel shifts in your body. It's pretty amazing, actually. And it seems like it shouldn't work but it does. And that's what I can say is give that a try.

And what I love about cycle syncing in general for women who may not have PCOS but who are trying to conceive and struggling with that process is that so much of our fertility is about, yes, hormonal balance but also about building a micronutrient sort of bank account, if you will, to signal to the body that you are in fact having an optimized internal ecosystem for the whole journey of fertility from conception to birth. Because it requires so much from the body.

So one of the things I love about the cycle syncing food process is that you get to be exposed to the maximum amount of micronutrients consistently. Right? You're not just following one type of food plan that where you feel like you're eating the same things over and over again. You can apply...and the cycle syncing works if you're Paleo, if you're vegan, if you're dairy-free and gluten-free and sugar-free. It works for any type of diet but it's really about which foods are you prioritizing or turning the volume up each week so that you can really start to give your body all the micronutrients it might need to really maximize your fertile factor.

Katie: That's really cool. And you have...I wanna talk about the resource you've created for this because I think it's gonna be life-changing for a lot of women. So obviously women are incredibly busy these days, especially moms. And even this, like you mentioned, self-care is one more thing to add to your list or all these things. So, talk about your new resource that you've created that's designed to really help simplify this process.

Alisa: Well, I mean, I'm so...I have like butterflies in my stomach, I'm so excited about this. So when the book "Woman Code" came out, you know, there's chapter five of "Woman Code" has this chart, the famous chapter

five chart. And I would get constant emails from women still, you know, can you turn this into a tool that can make this like, you know, I don't have to memorize it or think about it or remember or open the book or make my own chart? And I thought that was a really smart idea.

So, after I...about the time my daughter was six months old, I decided to start work on building an app that would basically take all the guesswork out of cycle syncing for a woman. So we've been in development with that for about a year-and-a-half and we are just getting...we're just launching it now and it's really exciting, it's called MyFLO, without a W, just F-L-O, MyFLO. And it's an app that...it's the first and only period-tracking app that does two key things. I mean, it has six different features but the two things that I think are so unique are first that whatever symptom you are tracking, there will be a functional medicine suggestion to help you overcome that symptom in the short term.

So if you've got bloating or constipation or a zit, you know, what is the specific food you could eat right now, today, at lunch, at dinner, that might help you begin to address the underlying causes of that? The app will also track recurrent symptoms over time that are repetitive for you and customize a one-month functional medicine protocol to address the root causes of that recurrent symptom.

So I mean, because when I was looking at all of this, I just thought what is the point of tracking your period if you're not going to have a better period next month? If you just have the same symptoms and the same suffering month over month, what is the value in like nerding out with the data? I mean, it's like just...it felt like there was a big gap there. So that's the first and foremost thing, it's the first and only period-tracking app that's really designed to improve your period and balance your hormones.

But the second thing that it does of course is it lets you know where you are in your cycle and lays out for you everything. Where you are hormonally, what are your cognitive strengths that week, what should you focus on at work, what kinds of exercise is ideal for you that week, what kinds of foods you should eat that week, what kinds of things should you focus on in your relationships. And it allows you with a tap...two taps, to pick the activities that you feel inspired to go after that week and schedule them into whatever calendar system you're using. So it takes them out of the app into your real master planner for the week. So it really allows you to interact with your cycle in a truly empowered way. It's the ultimate bio hack for women based on what our innate cyclical nature really is all about.

Katie: That's so cool. And I'm looking at the app now and it's so neat because the part I'm excited about has the partner sync part where...because I'm always said we've used RFP for years but it's always him asking me what part of my cycle I'm in. So, I love that this kind of takes that out of the equation and he can just look it up for himself. Talk about that.

Alisa: So, you know, this was something that came out of my marriage. So, I would...every time I'd teach, you know, I always joke, I say, my husband and I we don't have like a chore wheel or don't like...I don't know, a lot of people organize their domestic relationships in different ways. I said, what we do is we cycle-sync our marriage. And people are like well, what the hell does that mean? And I said, well basically he knows where I am in my cycle and he knows that there are three kinds of things that he can focus on each of those phases showing up as my husband, that will create the most ease in our relating that week.

So for example, he'll know if we are in the first half of my cycle. So let's say we're in the follicular phase. Follicular phase I'm so interested in going out with him on a date. Let's go out to dinner. But during my ovulatory week, I would love...I prefer if we go out together with other couples and other friends because I'm super social and chatty that week. There's a distinction for each of us just like that. And he will know, for example, that if he's gonna bring up a suggestion of things we should do together that week socially, which one to suggest. And I'm like, God, you're reading my mind, you know? And he feels good because he's like, oh, I'm psychic and she's happy with me and I'm winning, you know, I feel like a champion, I feel like totally successful in my marriage because I'm armed with this information.

It extends into certainly understanding what kind of approach if we are gonna be intimate he's should be taking. You know, the first half of the cycle versus the second half is very different. The first half of the cycle you can get away with a little less foreplay, the second half, don't even think about not giving a woman enough foreplay in the second half of the cycle because she's not gonna be as satisfied. So he will know that information and be able to adjust his approach each week to really give me what it is that I need and also give himself an experience of always being successful in the interaction, never feeling like confused or...you know, reduces a lot of friction.

And then of course the third area is just in conversation and communication. There's different approaches to taking each week that your partner can take with you based on how your cognitive strengths shift each week. So we have...when we soft-launched this to our community, I mean, I get love letters from the husbands and the boyfriends, like thank you love letters. Like this is saving my relationship, I've been waiting for this my whole life, thank you so much. Like they're loving it.

And so I think it's really a wonderful little fun thing that you can add to your relationship and you just pop in their email address and they will get when you move, only when you are in your next phase, they'll get a notification, a little hormonal dossier from FLO, and let them know kind of what's up hormonally and like in a bulleted, like very easy-to-understand list like what they can do to really support you and themselves in the relationship that week.

Katie: I love that because my husband is very just like action-oriented and practical. And so like his go-to response to most things is like, okay, how do I fix it? So this is like his to-do list, like these are the things that fix the hormones this week.

Alisa: Yeah. I mean, it will even give the men...like if your man is somebody who likes to cook, you know, it will tell him like, okay, make this kind of dinner tonight. Like this is the kinds of foods to focus on this week if you're gonna cook that will help her feel her best. And if you're gonna cook anyway, why not make things that are gonna optimize everybody's well-being?

I agree, I think men...in my experience when I spoke at...what I learned very quickly from doing that workshop was that men love information. They're very practical and they want data, they wanna know exactly how and when things are working because they expect the knowledge of that to be...they have that relationship with their own bodies. Men want to know how do their bodies work, what are the hormonal patterns that govern my experience of reality and how can I optimize my health and my life with that? They're already doing cycle syncing, it's just that their cycle is 24 hours.

Think about how a man organizes his workflow during the day and exercise. They're gonna try to cram their maximum and most productive hours into the hours between 6 a.m. and 2 p.m., because that's when they have all the testosterone and cortisol that they're gonna have to stimulate them, their energy, their mental focus and their stamina. After two o'clock it becomes much harder for a guy every single day to be as productive towards the end of the day. They become more social between 2:00 and 6:00, and then from 6:00 to 10:00 they become more introverted.

So this is the...they have the same four phases that we have, they just have it in 24 hours. And so in a lot of ways it's harder for them. But they certainly know exactly what's going on and when and they try their best to optimize it. So it's like a natural thought for them to think that women would want to do this too. And so they're all about it. They love getting this information and supporting you in that way.

Katie: It's so cool. So how can people find the app?

Alisa: You can go to the website which is myflo, F-L-O, tracker.com, and then you'll be able to see the download links there to the different versions, different platforms.

Katie: Perfect. I'll make sure to link to that as well and to the book that you mentioned, and to your site. But real quick, also tell people where they can find you online.

Alisa: You can come to floliving, F-L-O, living.com and take advantage of all the resources there including my favorite resource that we built, which is the period-typing tool which will pop up for you when you come to the homepage. There are five-period types, five different colors and combinations. And you need to know which one you have because it's the fifth vital sign as decreed last year finally by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists. And it's so important to know which type you are because it will tell you what hormonal pattern is dominant for you and what you can do to start improving your hormonal balance right away.

So use the tool, it's free, you can use it every month. You know, that was my famous Dr. Oz segment was look before you flush, how the color of your period can help guide you on hormonal balance. And it is such a huge indicator of every month that you get, to see how you're doing. How are you doing with your self-care, your dietary choices, your lifestyle choices. If you have the right period type, the red type, then everything that you're doing is working. Any other type, any of the other four types means that you've still got some work to do. And you can get that immediate biofeedback every month with your period. It's such a helpful tool.

I hope that with the conversation that we've had that you're left with a feeling of positivity around your period. And that this is like a rich resource for you. Your own cycle, your own period, it's there to help you not to hinder you in any way. And we've just been given a lot of misinformation about it that makes us falsely believe that it is a hindrance. But in no way have I found that through all my years of researching the cycle and the hormones and the cognitive effects, it is there, it's really our super power. It's not a hindrance, it's a huge, huge, huge asset.

Katie: I love that. And I definitely would encourage everyone to check out your website and all your resources because they're really in depth and helpful. And of course I appreciate your time so much in being here. I could talk to you all day but I wanna respect your time and the listener's time. But maybe we'll have a round three one day and thanks for being here, Alisa. It's been awesome.

Alisa: Thank you, thank you so much, Katie, it's always fun to chat.

Katie: And thanks to all of you for listening, I'll see you next time on the Healthy Moms Podcast.

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