

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 82: Discovering the SIBO Solution with
Sylvie McCracken

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 have either given it to or encouraged to get it has absolutely loved it. So, again, check it out, kidscookrealfood.com/wellness.

This episode is sponsored by Mama Natural. And my friend, Genevieve, also known as Mama Natural, has just come out with game-changing pregnancy book called, "The Mama Natural Week to Week Guide to Pregnancy and Childbirth." So if you or anyone you know is pregnant, I strongly recommend picking up a copy or just grabbing one to donate to your local library. It is an incredible resource and definitely one of the best resources I've seen for new moms. Also, Genevieve has a week-to-week email series for pregnancy. So you've seen this on other websites, but this one is a natural take on week-to-week emails that tells you how your baby is growing, what milestones he or she is heading, all that cool stuff, and it's free. So you can check it out at mamanatural.com/wellness to sign up for the free week-to-week pregnancy email series, or also to check out her amazing book.

Welcome to The Healthy Moms Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and I'm here today with my friend, Sylvie McCracken, who is amazing and who was a former celebrity assistant in Hollywood. The name of her original blog was hollywoodhomestead.com, that's the name. And now, she's a full-time entrepreneur. She lives in Oregon with her husband and three kids, and she writes about treating and preventing all kinds of health conditions from SIBO to gut conditions, and using real food and natural remedies. She also writes about whatever she wants because she's a rebel like that, which I love. And she also mentors other entrepreneurs on her site, sylviemccracken.com. So, we welcome. Thanks for being here.

Sylvie: Thanks for having me, Katie. I'm so excited to be here.

Katie: I think it's gonna be so fun. So, I wanna jump right in. Let's talk about a topic that I think is gaining a lot of understanding right now, but there's also a lot of misinformation about, and that's SIBO. And you have a resource on it, which is why I'm so excited to talk to you, because your resource really helps my husband who is struggling with it. So to start off, can you just kind of define for anyone who doesn't know what SIBO is?

Sylvie: Yeah, for sure. So SIBO, at its simplest, just stands for...the SIBO stands for Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth. So that just means...I mean, pretty much, the name says it all, but it's basically an overgrowth of bacteria in the small intestine. You know, for someone that's just hearing about it for the first time, you might think, you know, it's just, "Oh, it's like any other bacterial problem. Just throw antibiotics at it and kill that nasty bacteria, and you're done with it."

But it's not so much that it's the presence of bacteria that's the problem, it's more that it's an overgrowth, and that it could be, you know, the wrong type of bacteria. So bacteria that belong in the large intestine, which has, somehow, gotten into the small intestine, which is the problem, and that's why it becomes a little bit trickier than just, you know, any like, I don't know, E. coli or something like that that you are more used to just dealing

with it, eradicating it, and moving on with your life.

Katie: Yeah, definitely. And also, it seems like the small intestine is kind of like a hard place, actually, in your body even just physiologically to reach. So it's even more difficult than, say, like a throat infection or something like that? Did you find that because...tell your story a little bit. You had SIBO yourself, right?

Sylvie: Yes. So, I mean, my story with SIBO, you know, is long. And the truth is, like, I don't even...I wish I knew when I, you know, started with SIBO. I can tell you when...you know, because it's very possible that it started in childhood. The truth is, you know, part of the reason I started a health and nutrition blog a few years ago was because I had just such a list of diagnoses that it that it was ridiculous.

And so, one of the many ones, and I didn't even know about SIBO when I started the blog, but I remember going to one of my doctors, probably 2012, and I remember bringing him an article about SIBO and saying, "I'm pretty sure I've got this, like I just...I can check off every single one of these symptoms. Can we please test for this?" And I got a bit of an eye roll and, you know, "Okay, whatever," you know, "Let me just refer you to the gastroenterologist."

So I've got sent to the gastroenterologist, went to him, said, you know, "Hey, I think I have this. Can we test for this?" And he's like, "Look." And I didn't know anything about it. I really hadn't done much research other than a few articles. And, you know, he said, "We can test you for it, but..." you know, he didn't really take it that seriously. He didn't really believe in it all that much, but he said, "Look, or we can just treat you for it. It's a fairly, you know, easy treatment. We just take antibiotics and then, you know...and that will be that. And you know, in that way, you'll save yourself all these money," I was uninsured, "so, you'll save yourself the money of the testing and the retesting, and all that jazz." And so, I was like, "Okay, seems legit." He said, "Here you go. Order these antibiotics from Canada and you'll be all set to go."

So, that's exactly what I did. I followed the instructions. I took antibiotics for the, you know, umpteenth time of my life, and I never tested before, never tested immediately after, and just went on my merry way assuming, "Well, I did the course of antibiotics. So, it must be gone now." So cut to probably over a year after that, I was working with a naturopath and we were working on other things. She's in the real food space and we were working, I don't know, my thyroid, we were working on H. pylori. I mean, again, I...you know, name a diagnosis and I probably had it.

And at some point in that, you know, I brought up SIBO of like, "Hey, I'm pretty sure I had this. I'm pretty sure I treated it, but I seem to be, you know, again, checking off all the symptoms. So can we test for it again because this can't be? Like why am I this bloated and, you know, it just seems to have no rhyme or reason." And, of course, at that point, we finally tested for the first time ever, and I tested off the charts, so positive, right?

And so that's sort of when it started, you know, I started getting a little bit closer to figuring it out. But once again, you know, she is very knowledgeable on a lot of things, but at the time was not that knowledgeable about SIBO. So, again, she said, "Well, you know, based on the type of SIBO you have, let's treat it with these types of antibiotics, traditional antibiotics."

So once again, I did another course of antibiotics, again, didn't retest immediately after, did not know, you know, when we can talk about kind of the recommended things to follow immediately after treatment. And so that was still just the beginning of my journey. So, you know, that's sort of part one. That was when I still had not resolved it.

Eventually, you know, I started seeing SIBO specialist and then, of course, finally treated it with multiple...attacked it with multiple different solutions: herbal antibiotics, elemental diet, prokinetics, post-treatment, the SIBO diet, to prevent recurrence. I mean, that's when we got serious, so a heck of a journey.

Katie: Yeah, it sounds like. And then I've read you have an eBook about it, that's an amazing resource. But what are some of the symptoms that someone...if they think they may have SIBO, what would they potentially experience?

Sylvie: Yeah, for sure. So, I mean, it can be a long range of symptoms. I would say the one that seems to be in, you know, 100% of the cases I would say, at least every single person I've spoken to and, at least, at this point, I've spoken to quite a lot because of my blog and my eBook. The one that's overarching is the bloating. So the gas, either, you know, passing gas or burping, but bloating nonetheless.

And so even, you know, men, you know, women, you get that like five months pregnant look, and it's a really uncomfortable, painful feeling in your abdomen where at some points, it was uncomfortable for me to even sit down at the table. Like just having my body at that 90-degree angle, it was sort of, like, when you're nine months pregnant, and you just feel like you're waddling around. It was that similar feeling even though I wasn't quite that large. It was this ridiculous amount of pressure and distention. Buttoning pants was completely out of the question. It was either yoga pants or dresses. So that was definitely...that seems to be for everyone.

And then, of course, it gets very individual in terms of some people have diarrhea, some people have constipation, some people alternate between both, some people have cramps, you know, and then, of course, if you wanna go down a few rabbit holes, there is this psychological stuff or, you know...with gut health as we know now, you know, there's that gut-brain connection, that gut-skin connection. And so some people have acne. Other people have, you know, depression. Other people have other psychological stuff coming up. But as far as that main symptom, it's that, you know, ridiculous bloating.

Katie: Yeah. My husband definitely experience that, and he was like really, really frustrated, and especially, because he never had that before and it was nothing normally you would think would work works for him. So you mentioned that at first, you just treated with antibiotics, and then eventually, you tested. What do you recommend for people who maybe are bloated and maybe think they might have it? Do you recommend getting tested, or do you recommend just taking the natural approach and jumping right in?

Sylvie: I totally sympathize with people that are trying to do this the most cost-effective way and, you know, kind of want to...I love skipping as many unnecessary stuff as we can, of course. But the thing with SIBO, and I see a lot of people going straight to treatment without testing, which is what I did the first time for sure, the problem is you're kind of driving without a map, you know. And the problem with it is that you don't know, for example, what I've seen people do and, unfortunately, some friends of mine have done this and come to me after the third round of it, is that they just...you know, they treat without having tested prior and then they test after, which I got to give them credit for that, and then they come to me and they go, "I'm still positive." And the problem is, again, we don't know if you were off the charts positive before you treat it. So, like, did the treatment make a dent but didn't quite, you know, like finish it off, or did it do nothing at all and you need to find a completely new treatment option?

I think it can get more frustrating and more expensive in the long run if you don't test. I think if I had to suggest the most efficient way to do it, it would be test prior, choose your treatment option wisely, which we can talk more about, and then test immediately after. So you can read the directions on the testing, but I believe they recommend nowadays to test within that two-week period of treating. So, again, testing three months after you finish treatment is not really reliable info either, and then, of course, doing things like prokinetics and, you know, following up with a SIBO diet are critical. That would be the most efficient way to do it.

And the reason I say choose your treatment option wisely is because it really will depend on what that first test says. If it says you have a mild, you know, case of SIBO, then you might choose antibiotics, or you might choose herbal antibiotics. If it says that your SIBO levels are off the charts, that's a bummer, but you can now kind of arm yourself with that information and say, "Okay, I'm gonna go a little more aggressive. I might do elemental diet and I might know that one..." What do you call it? "Like, one round isn't going to kill it, but it's gonna get me pretty darn close. So, maybe I'll do one round, take a week off, and do a second round, and then

retest." You know what I mean? And so if you have that information, you can really make that decision a little more wisely instead of just kind of winging it.

Katie: Yeah. That makes sense. So what are the tests for SIBO? What would someone ask their doctor for, for instance to get tested?

Sylvie: Sure. So I would recommend getting a doctor that knows what the heck they are doing for starters. And unfortunately, you know...I mean, you have a better shot with a naturopath. But even with the naturopath, I would call the office and find out, "Hey, have they treated SIBO," you know, whatever, "Are they experienced with SIBO?" Because, unfortunately, that's where you're gonna spend, you know, a lot of money, is on...if you're getting kind of wrong information or getting the test not right appropriately, etc.

The gold standard test for SIBO and the only one I would recommend, there are many, would be the three-hour lactulose test. And so that one, it had to be ordered by a doctor up until recently. I believe in a couple of weeks, I'll be able to announce that you can order it directly, but I'm waiting on confirmation for that so I can't really announce it right this second. But, hopefully, that will be case because then, at least, what that would allow you to do is order the test and go into the doctor with the result, and have them help you read that and figure out what to do with it. But the three-hour lactulose test, and if you Google that, I'm sure there are at least three labs that do it, so finding a lab that does it.

The good part about it is it's an at-home test. And so you don't need to go into the lab. It is three-hours, so you got to kind of block off that morning. But you can do it at home and you're just taking a lactulose solution, and you're breathing into these tubes. It looks really weird because you're like, "How can, me, breathing into a tube that gets a little bit of condensation and then I mail it in? How could that be indicative of anything?" I honestly have no idea, but it works.

Katie: That's really fascinating and that would be great if people could order it themselves. I know a lot of people, even the area we are, there's not really access to a lot of naturopaths. So just taking that step would make the treatment so much faster.

Sylvie: Totally. And then you could at least consult...you know, there's doctors that you can consult with via Skype and, of course, you know, things differ based on state and that kind of thing, but, yeah. I mean, it's something that, with a little bit of guidance, you can mostly, you know, do a lot of it yourself. You just need a little bit of...a second set of eyes of someone that's experienced in this topic.

Katie: Yeah, definitely. So from there, like say someone has gotten a diagnosis for sure, what would be your recommended options depending on like mild case versus really severe case, which is what my husband, we found out, ended up having. So what would you recommend in those different cases?

Sylvie: Yeah. And you know, unfortunately, I...You know, what's funny is that in my very first round of dealing with SIBO, I mean, again, I didn't test so I don't know, but, you know, it could have been that it was mild for me at that point. But I ended it up screwing it up even worse by treating it haphazardly, not doing any of the post-treatment care, and having a heck of a recurrence. So that's something to note, too, that you know, it could be mild now, but it might be severe later if you're not taking it seriously.

So, I would say...I mean, you know, it's kind of tricky because here are the different treatment options. I mean, you've got traditional antibiotics, and so, those will depend a little bit on whether...when your test comes back, you could be hydrogen dominant or you could methane dominant. And so your doc will probably prescribe slightly different antibiotic combos, a traditional antibiotic combos depending on that. So that's one option.

Option two is herbal antibiotics and those are, you know, there's a handful of different herbal antibiotics that come in pill form that you would be taking, and then there's elemental diet which is...essentially, it's a tube-feeding formula that you can drink out of a glass, and the essence of it is that it supposed to keep you alive

and starve out the bugs. So those are in varying in degrees of aggressive, I guess, I would say.

So here's the thing. Like when I...you know, in hindsight, my first proper test for SIBO which was, you know, when I had already treated it that one time with the gastroenterologist not having any idea what we are doing, was pretty off the charts. When I eventually consulted with a SIBO specialist, she told me that that antibiotic course that I did immediately after that test, she said, "Well, that would have...you know, no wonder it didn't work. You would have needed four courses with the levels that high." So, you know, again, it's like, "Well, now, you tell me? Okay, great."

So, I would have probably, I should have probably gone straight to elemental diet, which is the most impressive treatments. That said, you know, again, kind of keeping cost in mind and all of this, some people that comment on my blog or email in, or, you know, that are reading my eBook, you know, they genuinely come to me and say, "Look, you know, my...the traditional antibiotics are covered by my insurance, and these herbal antibiotics are ridiculously expensive, the elemental diet is ridiculously expensive, the testing and doctors alone was already expensive, so I'm gonna go with traditional antibiotics and that's just that." And I 100% understand and I agree to a degree, like, if that's what you can do and that's the most logical thing for you based on cost or availability, or anything else, then go for it. But that's when the post-treatment stuff is going to matter and also, you know, retesting, and all of that jazz.

I do think that if you can do herbals, which are a little more expensive and, obviously, not covered by insurance, it's a...you know, I always...I mean, I'm gonna prefer herbal antibiotics over traditional antibiotics. If we can get away with it, we're not gonna have those side effects that traditional antibiotics bring. But again, everyone's gonna have to kind of make that decision for themselves based on all of those different factors.

And with elemental diet, the big factor in addition to the fact that it's not really cheap, the other part of it is that emotionally, it's pretty taxing. I mean, you're basically, you know, drinking formula that was formulated to be put in a tube. It tastes horrific. And emotionally, you know, your families over there having dinner and you're sipping this thing down. I mean, it can be a little depressing for a few weeks. So you have to be ready because doing it for three days and not completing it, is a complete waste of everything.

S, you have to be at that point, ready to roll up your sleeves, ready to make it your full-time job for two weeks and say, "I'm gonna kill this things once and for all." And that's where I was at. By the time I got to elemental diet, I was like, "This thing is not gonna win. I'm gonna win. And I'm gonna have this thing, I'm gonna take this elemental formula, and these bugs are going to starve."

Katie: Yeah. It definitely is effective. That's what my husband ended up doing as well, and it was the only thing that has ever...like the bloating, it really reduced the bloating for him. But talk about it a little bit more in depth because I know you've mentioned, like, it's like essentially drinking the formula they had put in a feeding tube, but what does that actually include, and how long is the normal course of action?

Sylvie: Yeah. So with elemental diet, there's two ways to do it. You can do the store-bought one which was literally made to, you know, keep people alive at the hospital and put in a feeding tube. And that one is made by Nestle, so you can imagine what these ingredients nut-sucker are. And, you know, of course, they didn't take taste into account because if you're doing it in a feeding tube, nobody is tasting it, so who cares?

The ingredients aren't amazing. They definitely don't kind of fall under what I would consider, you know, all of them under real food, necessarily. But again, desperate times call for desperate measures. That's definitely one way to do it. It's about a two-week course and it'll cost you that...store-bought one is the more expensive version than the home-made version, which we'll talk about in a second, and that will cost you about \$1,000 for two weeks. So, you know, kind of brutal.

And here's the thing. Like based on my levels again, one round of that. So two weeks of that did not kill my SIBO entirely. It got me a heck of, you know, a lot closer. I had to do it twice. So I did the first round. I did with

that Vivonex Plus is what it's called and it's online. You might even find it at Walgreens, I don't know. But yeah, it's about \$1,000 for two weeks and you just basically add water, you mix it. I would highly recommend like putting it over ice and trying to...I don't know, add stevia, do something, and just plug your nose and hope for the best.

It contains soy and dyes, and, you know, that kind of stuff, but it's...part of the reason I used that was because, A, I wanted something really, really easy for my husband to mix, for my daughter to be able to put together, and I wanted...and also, it is tested for SIBO, and so that was important to me and that I didn't really want to experiment any further. By the time I got to elemental diet, I've been dealing with this for...well, actively, for over a year at that point and who knows, you know, inactively, kind of dealing with the symptoms for several years. So I was like, "Okay, this thing has been tested? Yes. Sign me up for the soy, the dyes, and whatever else is in it as long as it kills this thing." So that's one way to go.

Then, there is a home-made elemental formula that you can do and that's much cheaper. It's still not necessarily cheap, it's probably about \$400 if I remember it correctly, say, for a couple of weeks and that's what I did the second round. So part of it is, you know, I like to guinea pig on myself so that I could write about it as well. So I thought the second time around, I was like, "Okay, now that I'm used to what going through this elemental diet is like, let me take it up a notch, get a little bit cleaner ingredients, still not amazing, and also save a little bit of money, and I'm willing to kind of have to measure things out in the kitchen."

So, you know, that's where you're gonna get each ingredients separately and mix them together. So you need amino acids and you'll order those. That's where the expense comes in really, is in the amino acids, and then you need some sort of carbohydrates. So there's a few different ways you can do it. I did it with not the cleanest carbohydrate. I'd used dextrose, and part of the reason for that was because it was inexpensive and also easy to mix. You can do it with certain types of honey, which I knew would be a little bit harder for me to mix with the powder of the amino acids and all of that. And, you know, the question that I get...oh, and then, of course, you need some sort of fat, so you need, you know, either coconut oil, or olive oil, and you know, because...I mean, this is just what we need to stay alive, basically.

And then in order to get the nutrients that we need, I added a multivitamin to that. And, you know, if you want to kind of flavorings of some sort, as long as they don't, you know, they're not sugar-based, or anything that's gonna feed the bacteria, you can add a little bit of vanilla extract or something like that. What was I gonna say? Oh, you know, the question that I get a lot with this is, "But dextrose or honey, or all these other carbohydrate options, aren't they going to feed the bacteria? Can't I just leave that out?" And the answer is yes, it is gonna feed the bacteria, and no, you can't leave it out. But the thing is, I mean, A, you know, it might slow off, slow down the die-off a little bit because it is feeding the bacteria a little bit, but trust me, you probably wanna slow it down because it's pretty brutal. The die-off is pretty brutal sometimes.

You know, you really do need some carbohydrates to stay alive. We can't go on a no-carb diet. This is as if you were eating nothing but chicken and had zero vegetables, zero grains, zero anything, like, we can't survive on chicken alone, we're not cats. So no, I would not recommend you going without the carb for that two-week period, I would just choose whatever carb doesn't make you...you know, doesn't exacerbate your symptoms and makes it easy enough for you to get through it. And you can mix this all together and have it, or you could have it individually if you wanted. So for me, for example, I found that the olive oil was kind of hard to mix in with it, so I just had it separately. I had a little shot of olive oil essentially. So that's what I do the second time around.

Katie: Which do you feel, like, was easier to comply with and also which works better for you?

Sylvie: If I had to do it again, I would skip the store-bought. I think it wasn't...you know, the home-made wasn't as hard to deal with as I thought, and it was quite a bit less expensive, it was half the cost. As far as easier to comply with, they were both hard, like, I had to...I was kind of hungry, but more than hungry, I was just kind of missing...I just wanted to chew something. I just wanted to eat something salty and crunchy. So it was hard to

comply either way and you really just have to get in that zone of like...I mean, I'm sure everyone listening, at some point or another, has done a "diet" of some sort, you know. If you had any of the traditional yo-yo dieting that I've done in my life, I mean, any diet where you're, you know, you're skipping, you know, sugar or whatever has been hard to some extent. This is like that, but a whole new level because now, you're not eating at all. So you're drinking this nasty stuff three times a day or five times a day, however you wanna break it down, and, you know, you're smelling deliciousness in the other room if your family is over there having dinner.

So I would say neither one of them was all that easy to comply with, but I was just kind of crossing off the days like I was sentenced and just getting through it. And for me, the motivation was like, it's going to be hard for two weeks, or it's gonna can be the really hard for two week, or it can be, somewhat, hard for months and months, and maybe even years. And for me, I was just like, "You know what? This is it," like, "This is where this thing ends. I'm not taking it into the following year. It dies this year." So you have to be determined.

Katie: Yeah, I can see that. I almost, I guess, compare it to labor a little bit and, like, from what I've seen as a doula, like, short labors tend to me more intense, but then, of course, they're over faster, or you can have like a longer prolonged labor, but you're gonna be obviously, in discomfort a little bit longer. Obviously, getting tested is the best option. If someone truly doesn't have the ability to get tested, well, doing the elemental diet, for instance, will that make any other conditions worse, or if that's kind of the gold standard of treatment, is it something worth trying even if you can't get tested?

Sylvie: That's a good question. I mean, you know, I don't know in terms of if...You know, sometimes people have candida as well, like, you know, the elemental diet isn't really meant to deal with candida. Could the dextrose exacerbate it, or the honey, or whatever carb you choose? Maybe, you know. So the truth is, I don't know. I feel like I wouldn't go blind in it, or at least, not, you know...I mean, elemental is no joke. So if you don't have SIBO and if you don't have a severe case of SIBO, I don't know why you'd wanna put yourself through that because it's not fun at all. And if it happens to be something else like candida or something like that, then wouldn't you wanna treat that appropriately?

So I think if you go and get a SIBO test and it's completely negative, then, cool. I mean, you know, because the truth is that's one of the hardest ones to treat. Then, what that means is if you're having symptoms, then it's something else, and then your doctor can, you know, may be run a couple other tests and see what else you might have and treat that appropriately. I think if you're just kind of throwing stuff at it and not feeling better, and I see that a lot. I get that a lot on my blog where people are saying, you know, "I did this treatment and I still feel X, Y, and Z." And then, when I ask, "Well, what were your tests?" "I never tested." "Then how do you know you have SIBO? You don't."

I mean, people are self-diagnosing all the time. I understand the...you know, I think we know our bodies better than anybody and I understand the hunch that you have SIBO, I totally get that. But I think that you should know for sure. You should know if it's hydrogen dominant or methane dominant. You should know is it like a crazy level of SIBO or is one that a quick two-week course of antibiotics that really delves and impact your life all that much will take care of it, you know what I mean? And also, figuring out what the root of cause of it, which is a whole other ballgame.

Katie: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense. So you've mentioned herbal antibiotics a couple of times, and also regular antibiotics. And I know a lot of people listening will have a very negative view on antibiotics just with all the recent information about antibiotic dominance and, you know, we're trying to avoid them for ear infections and all the new reports coming out. Explain why this is one of those times when even for naturopath, this can be a time when antibiotics are warranted.

Sylvie: Yeah. Well, for starters, because they, you know, they're shown to work in a lot of cases. So, again, if I had to go back, I wouldn't do it because my case was so severe. It would have taken four courses of antibiotics, and I don't even know if that's recommended, I mean, that's a heck of a dose. I'm not a fan of antibiotics at all. I grew up taking them so regularly that in my teen years, they had to shoot penicillin in my butt

because taking amoxicillin or anything like that was just not working anymore. My antibiotic resistance was like, you know, world class. So I'm definitely not one of those people that says, "Let's go straight to antibiotics, it's more of a...If there's nothing else we can do, let's do that."

I think, again, because they're proven to work in SIBO depending on what your case is, because a lot of insurances cover it, and herbal antibiotics are no joke not cheap, I think that that's another good reason to use them. And because, really, you know, you can just take them and kind of go on with your day. I mean, yes, you might have die-off symptoms, but you're not on elemental diet kind of completely weak for two weeks having to take time off work, etc. So I think that that's one of the reasons. Of course, you know, it's ironic because antibiotic overuse is one of the causes of SIBO. But then, of course, it also treats SIBO, so that's one of those huhs? But, it's just the antibiotics are just gonna get rid of that, you know, of course, the harmful bacteria and also the good guys as well. But with SIBO, I mean, sometimes, you gotta do what you gotta do.

As far as herbal antibiotics go, that's definitely better in terms of you're not gonna deal with those traditional antibiotic what you call it, you know, symptoms or downsides, I guess. So the antibiotic resistance and all of that, the side effects that traditional antibiotics bring, like, you know, maybe a yeast infection or stuff like that that you might deal with with the traditional antibiotics, you're not gonna deal with all of that. And then, you know, herbal antibiotics can be more effective. It's not by tons, but they can be more effective than traditional antibiotics. They're more specific because you're kind of mixing and matching things that have been studied for SIBO like Allison, which is AllyMed is the brand name that Allison is, and then, you know, Burberry in a name, and these kinds of things. So you're mixing and matching a little more. That's also why the cost kind of goes up.

The AllyMed is definitely not cheap. If I remember correctly, the bottle is \$180 and I think it might take a couple of bottles for the treatment, if I remember correctly. I have that on my blog. I don't remember off the top of my head. That's for 14 days, I mean, that's going to be a little more natural. You might end up without the yeast infection and that kind of stuff, and you might be able to treat it even more effectively than traditional antibiotics.

But again, you know, I'm not...this is not one of those times where I'm like, "Yeah, you know, traditional antibiotics are completely whack, you know. Avoid them at all cost." I mean, if your insurance covers it, if money is a concern, if your doctor is recommending it, you know, it's definitely a possibility. I mean, it did not work for me, but just because it didn't work me, it doesn't mean they don't work. They have been proven to work quite a bit.

Katie: Yeah. That makes sense. And you've mentioned that you think part of the reason it also didn't work for you is that you didn't do a follow-up diet and you weren't intentional with that. So what does that mean? What would a follow-up diet for SIBO look like?

Sylvie: I mean, it's interesting because if I had to guess, which, you know, I mean, guessing is probably a...it's not that useful, but I think back on when I went to the doctor and I said, "I think I have SIBO. Will you test me," etc., I mean, it's possible that, you know, it was a pretty mild case. And actually, doing the antibiotics and not doing what I recommend, post-treatment, made me have a worse case in the long run, like made the recurrence that much worse in than it was to begin with. So anyway, so it's possible that the antibiotics would have worked if I had done immediately following prokinetics, which is, you know, basically something that will help your migrating motor complex to work appropriately.

So one of the things in SIBO is that your migrating motor complex, MMC, isn't working correctly, and that just means it's just that sweeping motion in your small intestine, which is kind of moving things along down the track, right? And so if that's not working, things are kinda backing up, things are not moving, you know, it's leading to that overgrowth, etc. So making sure, especially post-treatment, when you've killed all these bugs, you know, you wanna keep the party moving out of the house, so to speak. So having those prokinetics post-treatment for however long your doctor recommends but several weeks, at least, is key, key, key, and one of

the things, I think, people skip over the most thinking, "Oh, I don't need that." Yeah, you do.

And then the other thing is the SIBO diet, which is basically, you know, we could argue about it all day. Some people recommend simply a low-FODMAP diet. Some people recommend SCD, which is specific carbohydrate diet. What I have in my SIBO eBook is a combination of both, and also removing a few other things that might not feed the SIBO, but are not necessarily all that helpful for us in terms of just a nutrient dense healing diet. And so it's a combination of sort of SCD low-FODMAP and Paleo just to make it kind of the best possible situation for your gut. And what that's going to allow is for, you know, for you not to be feeding those bugs in any way, shape, or form, and to prevent recurrence, which is...one of the worst parts about SIBO is, you know, that it comes back often. And so you don't have to do that SIBO diet forever, but at least, follow in treatment for, you know, a couple of months as close as you possibly can without driving yourself crazy is super, super helpful.

Katie: Yeah, that makes sense. And you mentioned your eBook. So when we found out that my husband had SIBO, I was looking for resources and I was like, "Oh, Sylvie is a friend. This is great. I'm sure eBook has some good stuff." But I was blown away. It is like an incredible in-depth resource like, probably, the best that I've ever seen on this. What led you to write it? And have you seen like amazing results from readers? Are you hearing...I'm sure you get like amazing success stories from it because it was definitely helpful for us.

Sylvie: Thank you, yeah. I mean, you know, it was interesting because when I decided to write it, I really had no idea if, you know, if it was gonna resonate with that many people. And I was so sick of researching it for myself, and kind of sick of talking about it and just sick of dealing with it. I remember kind of towards the end of that eBook, I was like, "As soon I'm done with this eBook, I'm never talking about this topic ever again," because it was just one of those things where I was like, "This cannot consume my life," which it definitely feels like it when you're in it.

So I wrote it, and I was like, "Okay, if it helps one person, this is going to be, you know, useful. If it helps, you know, just someone to get through," and I knew people were gonna be asking me, "Hey, how did you treat it?" I mean, even fellow bloggers have come to me all the time. And so having something that I'm gonna say exactly like this, "Here's everything I know," is just helpful and it saves me from writing a lot of emails.

So, yeah. I mean, I just, you know, I was researching it for myself, anyway, and I, you know, had already written a couple of eBooks before, so I kind of knew how to put it together into a resource that would help other people, and I have an amazing designer that could make my ugly research look pretty, and so, I thought, "Why not? Let's put it out there." And it's been kind of mind-blowing because, I guess, because there wasn't really that much on SIBO yet. It's just starting now to sort of gain some traction. It ended up being just kind of a go-to resource for a lot of people.

And so, you know, one of the things that held me back where I kind of second guessed myself and said, "Oh, I don't know. Should I write this thing? I'm not a doctor. Why is anyone gonna care what I have to say about SIBO? Why don't they just ask the doctors which, you know, eventually, will write their own books?" And I just thought, "You know what? Sometimes you just need to hear from a patient. Sometimes you just need to hear from someone that's been in the trenches because really, what people...the reason that, you know, people come to my blog and ask me either by email or on comments on my blog or social media, "How did you do, X, Y, Z?" is because they know I've been through it. And so sometimes you just wanna hear it from a peer.

And so, that's what it is. It's not meant to replace your doctor at all, but it's meant to give you what your doctor can't do in 15 minutes, is give you this comprehensive handbook where you can really inform yourself and you can go, you know, not as a patient that just sits there like I did the first couple of times and held out my hand and said, "What do you recommend, doc?" "This pill." "Great," and I take it, and I'm completely a passive participant in this whole thing. You need to inform yourself like with any condition. You need to go in there and say, "Doc, I've read about elemental and herbal, and traditional, you know. What do you think based on the fact that my test show high methane?" I mean, if you go into the doctor and you say that, trust me, you're

gonna get a whole different answer. You're gonna get a whole different buy-in from that doc, and you're gonna be able to really actively manage your condition.

So that's, you know, having the support of leading SIBO practitioners with this eBook, having Dr. Siebecker endorse my eBook, Dr. Melanie Keller endorse my book has been mind-blowing and huge, and an honor. But I just hope it helps people kind of treat this condition a lot quicker than I did. It doesn't have to be years and thousands of dollars, which it was in my case. If I knew then what I know now, it could have been a few hundred dollars and just a handful of months, and I would have been done with it.

Katie: Yeah. And I think what you just said is such an important point for SIBO, and also just for any health condition or anything we deal with, which is that you can't just outsource the responsibility for your health to your doctor. And the more educated you are as a patient, especially if you have a great doctor, it actually speeds up the course of treatment, it makes better results. And I think that's also, at least for me, even the measure of how do I know I have found a really good doctor, if there's a doctor who's actually willing to listen and it's not just immediately trying to, like, cut you off and write you off, and notices what you're doing, then you find someone who can really be partner in your health.

But at the end of the day, you can...you know, it's like doctors are an advisor, but you're the one who's responsible. You're the one who has to do the action to get better. You're the one who's making the choices that are gonna make you better or worse, and you can definitely get awesome advice from doctors and there's many really good ones, but at the end of the day, you're still responsible for your health and you're still the one that's gonna be sick if their treatment is incorrect. So you always, I think...at least that's my soapbox is you always have to do the research for yourself even if you're working with a great doctor.

Sylvie: Absolutely. And I think, you know, I even talked to my doctor, you know, I had several doctors, but I remember talking to a couple of the leading sort of SIBO practitioners once I was sort of way down the road with this thing, and I remember asking them like, "Hey, why don't you use elemental diet as like a first course of action more often?" And they said, "You know, honestly, because even though it would be effective, a lot of the times, we see noncompliance. Patients are not quite ready for that." And I felt that that was really interesting. And I kind of wondered to myself, "Would I have been, you know, as ready to handle that, you know, boot camp that it was really to go through those couple of weeks of elemental that very first time I treated SIBO?" I don't know because the truth is, that part of what made me...it's not, you know, like super compliant, like I didn't stray from that elemental diet at all, but part of the reason why that was kind of non-negotiable for me is because I was really at my wits' end by then.

And so I kind of...you know, I understand these doctors, where they're kind of trying other treatments first is because they're frustrated, too, like patients don't understand just how big of a deal this is and just how important it is, and just how, you know, the compliance in terms of elemental is critical. And if you decided to have, you know, regular meal halfway through the two-week period, it would kind of throw the whole thing and stuff like that. So I found that really fascinating as well.

Katie: That makes sense. And yeah, I mean, certainly, having seen now my husband go through it for, I think he did almost three weeks, and he was miserable and tired, and grumpy, and I definitely would not recommend it for the faint of heart. And also, like, make sure your family is prepared because, like...I was like, "Oh, he just won't eat, but it'll be fine. With the rest us, it'll be okay." But there is a lot of support that goes into it, and if you've got...a family member going through it like it really would be good for the entire family to be supportive and understanding because it's certainly difficult like you said.

Sylvie: Yeah, absolutely. I definitely...I enlisted help. I hired help, actually, during that time so that it didn't all fall on husband. And so I had a housekeeper helping me out, and I also just had a diffuser of essential oils in my room. So anytime they were having dinner, I was like, "I'm just gonna smell peppermints," and stuff like that, and just having herbal tea on tap, you know, it was just like...Just herbal tea which, you know, there's a few that are on the no-list for SIBO. But otherwise, if you find a couple that you like, that you can just be

sipping so that you can feel like you're a normal human being for a little while is super helpful.

Katie: Yeah. And once if I discovered and just trying to make him like a little bit more emotionally happy because he was...like you said, the mix that you have eat tastes terrible. Or drink. So what I was doing to get the fat in, instead of just like a shot of olive oil, I would basically make, like, almost like bulletproof herbal tea by blending MCT oil into the hot tea.

Sylvie: I love it. That's perfect.

Katie: So that was like a little hack that helped us.

Sylvie: Yeah, for sure. And that, you know, it's funny like that fat, you know, really helps. I mean, it helps satiate like it's...I've never been so intent, you know, like I've never kind of noticed just how much protein, carbs, and fat, how they all matter so much as when I dissected it in an elemental diet, where sometimes, I just didn't feel like having the olive oil and then I would realize I was hungry a few hours later. And it was just really fascinating.

Katie: Yeah, for sure.

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 wanna 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 have either given it to or encouraged to get it has absolutely loved it. So, again, check it out, kidscookrealfood.com/wellness.

This episode is sponsored by Mama Natural. And my friend, Genevieve, also known as Mama Natural, has just come out with game-changing pregnancy book called, "The Mama Natural Week to Week Guide to Pregnancy and Childbirth." So if you or anyone you know is pregnant, I strongly recommend picking up a copy or just grabbing one to donate to your local library. It is an incredible resource and, definitely, one of the best resources I've seen for new moms. Also, Genevieve has a week-to-week email series for pregnancy. So you've seen these on other websites, but this one is a natural take on week-to-week emails that tell you how your baby is growing, what milestones he or she is heading, all that cool stuff, and it's free. So you can check it out at mamanatural.com/wellness to sign up for the free week-to-week pregnancy email series or also to check out her amazing new book.

Katie: So I wanna kind of end on a not by throwing you a curveball because I didn't mention I was gonna ask you about this before, but you have a second site, sylviemccracken.com. And I get a lot of questions from readers who want advice on as moms starting their own business or finding ways they can work from home, and you mentored people on this. So talk a little bit about sylviemccracken.com and just, first of all, how you got started with that, and also ways that you help people to launch into entrepreneurial endeavors.

Sylvie: Sure, absolutely. So, I started...you know, a lot of people start their health and nutrition blogs, or their blogs in general because, you know, they start kind of as a hobby and then, maybe a few years down the road,

they're like, "Oh, maybe I'll turn this into a business." And really, that wasn't my case at all. When I started Hollywood Homestead, I was working full-time in Hollywood and I was the main provider for my family, and my husband was a stay-at-home dad, and I had three kids. And so I was supporting five people with my day job and I didn't have time for any kind of hobbies. I was, you know, like showers, hot meals. Those were my two hobbies, and those only happen occasionally, so, yeah.

So with two toddlers at home, I knew I wanted to start something. I knew I eventually wanted my own business. But I had no idea what I was doing. I had no idea how to create that. And I also, you know, had, you know...I don't even like to say I didn't have time because that's a phrase that I pretty much eradicated from my vocabulary, but let's just say I had a 40-hour, you know, a week day job and three kids at home; a teenager and two toddlers. So time was not necessarily abundant, and so I had to get really, you know, serious.

And so I started the blog, you know, knowing I wanted it to be a business pretty much from day one. So I basically...one of the things I did first and that I would recommend any moms that, you know, perhaps are stay-at-home moms or super busy, or maybe they work outside the home as well, you know, either way, you know, when you're a mom, you're super busy regardless, and maybe you're not having great sleep and all that stuff, the best thing that you can do is prepare the terrain a little bit for adding a business into that juggling game, and how you can do that is to get really efficient with your time. So, you know, I mean, I felt like in order for me to do this, one of the things I had to do was stop trying to be superwoman, like that had to go first.

So getting help, whether that means if you can afford paid help, awesome. I'm a huge fan of that. And if you can't, or if you can only afford some amount of paid help, then start enlisting, spouses and kids, and whatever, right? Because the truth is that a lot of us think that we have to work outside the home, come home, do everything that is home-related, do everything that is kid-related, and it's not true. And slowly but surely, you can get yourself out of the superwoman role. So that would be one huge tip because if you can add a few hours a week, you know, that are free for you to work on this business, you're gonna need that for sure.

But the second thing I would say is, it doesn't all have to happen overnight. I mean, for me, I started out really, you know, basically, taking courses, you know, to teach me what I needed to know. So I had no idea what WordPress was, how to use it, what a plugin was, nothing. So I started learning along the way. And then, you know, I started, I mean, by making \$30 and \$50 at a time, and it was, you know, certainly nothing that was gonna replace my six-figure day job, but it was a start.

And so I got really focused and really kind of carved out what I called office hours. So for me, that was a half-day on Saturday where I just kind of enlisted my husband and I was like, "Hey, you know," like, I made sure he was...you know, he and I were on the same page in terms of what my goal was with this business. And so that he could understand why after being home with the kids for five straight days, full-time, he was going to...you know, I was gonna disappear for another half day on Saturday, but, you know, we made this a family goal, and so that was my office hours. And the other "office hours" that I gave myself were very early morning. So that meant TV and Netflix, had to go out the window and I was going to bed at night early when the kids were going to bed, and that meant I was up at the crack of dawn and I spent two hours every morning before I went to work.

So that's how I built the business, you know, little bits at a time. And I managed to quit my day job a year after starting, which is pretty quick all in all, right? Some months, it felt like it was taking forever, and other months were, you know, a lot quicker, but I think that, you know, you have to decide. I think the decision of, Is this going to be serious? Do you really wanna do this? How bad do you want it? Are you willing to give up a little bit of your free time because unfortunately, like that's the sacrifice it's going to take." For me, that meant no more TV at night. It meant going to bed early. It meant getting up early, and it meant half of my Saturday was gonna go to that. And if you're willing to do it, there are, you know, there's people out there and courses out there, and books out there that can teach you everything you need to know.

My most popular course that I teach people is called, "Create Passive Income with eBooks," which is, you

know, how most of my income comes in on hollywoodhomestead.com, and so that's why I decided to teach that. And we have free webinars every once in a while on sylviemccracken.com. And, you know, I love, basically, teaching either people that already have a blog, how to monetize that, and/or people that are just getting started, as well, that's been kind of fascinating, is that we've had a lot of people join the course that don't have a blog at all. So that's been really eye-opening.

But one of the main parts of it is really that mindset of, you know, like I mentioned with SIBO, like I've had that little trip up where I thought, "Well, who am I to teach on this topic," you know, "I'm not a doctor. Who am I to write a book about SIBO?" But the truth is, as a patient and as someone who has been trenches, and has dealt with it and has treated it unsuccessfully, successfully, and so forth and so on, I know a heck of a lot about SIBO, and I can help people with that. And I'm sure that you, listening, have something that you can help people with and, you know, friends and family are probably asking, you know, coming to you asking for advice on this or that, and just like Katie has made a business out of it, and just like I've made a business out of it, I think that, you know, there's no reason why anyone couldn't do it.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I would say, it's encouraging, too that, you know, whatever that is, like for you, you found what works for you. You figured out the schedule it worked for you, the same for me. Don't try to imitate someone else so much as to figure out because everybody does have a thing that they are an expert at. And I know amazing bloggers who are as parenting or as crocheting, or crafting, or gardening, it could be really anything that you're an expert in or that you are becoming an expert in. And my kind of advice for them, too, is just always make sure that you're coming at it at the core. Even if there is a profit goal, you're coming out of the core within a desire to help people and a desire to make change because that's what's gonna actually get you through.

Like I did the same thing, we worked 80-hour weeks when we're first starting. Truly, it's like our family was just barely getting by, and that's what gets you through those nights, is when you feel like you can, hopefully, really effect the change and help others. And so, like, there has to be that core motivator, I think.

Sylvie: Absolutely. I mean, I joke that I was working for \$2 an hour for a very long time on the blog, but that's just what it takes, and I agree. I mean, you know, I love that it doesn't have to be mutually exclusive like you absolutely can help, you know, a ton of people and also make an income doing it. And I think we've just kind of gotten away from that, you know, just in having these...you know, we just gotten in a rut of like why we just have to go to work, and we just have to clock in and clock out. And, you know, work isn't...so most to be fulfilling. You just get a paycheck and then you can pay for your bills. But what if we were able to design our own jobs? And what if we were able to have both? We were able to provide for our family and also, you know, help people with something that we love. I mean, I think it's completely possible.

Katie: Me, too. And I hope...I know your information will be encouraging to people both who are facing health problems and SIBO, and also those who may be that's just a beginning pursuit for them, and I will make sure to include this to both of those in the show notes. But Sylvie, where could people find you online if they want to stay in touch and follow you?

Sylvie: Absolutely. So for health and nutrition stuff, I'm hollywoodhomestead.com, and Hollywood Homestead anywhere on social media. And then for entrepreneurship and business advice, I'm on sylviemccracken.com and Sylvie McCracken everywhere on social media.

Katie: Awesome. Like I said, I'll make sure to include links to those. Sylvie, thanks so much for being here. You're awesome.

Sylvie: Thank you so much for having me, Katie. You're awesome, too.

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

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