

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 99: Using Health Tracking to Discover Your
Own Personalized Medicine

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

Katie: This podcast is brought to you by Four Sigmatic. If you follow me on Instagram, you've probably seen me mention them because I have been using and loving and Instagramming their products for years. They have an amazing instant mushroom coffee. Hear me out before you think it's weird. I know, mushroom coffee doesn't sound good. It's not only the best instant coffee I've ever tried, it's also pretty high up on the list of best coffee I've tried. It's cheaper than coffee shop coffee and it's so convenient because it's so portable and it tastes so much better. But it isn't just ordinary coffee. It has super food mushrooms like Lion's Mane, Cordyceps, and Chaga mushrooms. And these mushrooms have some big health benefits, and especially immune benefits. I personally, especially love them for the energy and the mental clarity without the jitters from traditional coffee. And did I mention how good it tastes? So I always take these instant coffee packets with me when I travel, and I also always drink it at home these days now that they have a big tin that lasts about a month so I don't have to open a little packet every day.

Some friends of ours recently traveled for three months carrying only the backpacks on their backs, and they brought an entire three months supply of this instant coffee in their bag that had limited space. In other words, this coffee beat out a pair of jeans for how important it was to make it in the bag. It's that good. And, of course, if you aren't a caffeine person, they also have a variety of mushroom tea and other products that don't have the coffee so you can get the benefits without the caffeine. And I love them so much that I reached out and they agreed to give a discount to my listeners. So go to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and use the code "WELLNESSMAMA" to get 10% off. That's Four Sigmatic, F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/wellnessmama.

This episode is sponsored by Kettle and Fire Bone Broth. If you love the benefits of bone broth but don't love the time it takes to make and how tough it can be to find quality bones to make broth, Kettle and Fire is for you. Their bone broth is a regular staple in my kitchen these days and it's what I use to create the recipes in my new bone broth ebook. So they only use bones from 100% grass-fed pasture raised cattle that are never given hormones or antibiotics. Their broth is also unique because they focus on bones that are especially high in collagen, which is one of the healthiest things you can put in your body. You can find them at many Whole Foods on the west coast and you can also order online and get a discount at kettleandfire.com/mama. Again, that's kettleandfire.com/mama.

Katie: Hi, and welcome to the Healthy Moms Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and today I would like to introduce you to my friend, Andrea Nakayama. She is a big deal in the world of functional medicine and I have encountered her research quite a bit in my own research. She's a nutritionist who specializes in helping chronically ill people get better. In fact, her skills are very widely known and doctors now even consult with her on their own difficult cases. She now actually trains even practitioners in how to have the same type of clinical success that she's had. She also has an incredible and amazing and heartbreaking personal story, and I can't wait to chat with her. Andrea, welcome. Thank you.

Andrea: Thank you so much, Katie. I'm so excited to be here with you.

Katie: Well, I'm really excited to chat, and I always love to start with someone's story because I think it really helps to know where someone's coming from. You had your own health story and also an amazing life story, so can you start there and talk about how all of these triumphs that you've had come from that and your story of how you got here?

Andrea: Yeah, absolutely, and I think it's so true that many of us in the health space, both dealing with our own health issues and those of us who are helping others with health issues, we have often had our own challenges in this arena and for me, I was always interested in food and health, but things really kicked into high gear when my husband was diagnosed with a very aggressive brain tumor back in April of 2000 when I was just seven weeks pregnant with our first child. And of course, that was really scary. He was given about six months to live and during that time, we took...you know, we took the lead and decided we were gonna do everything and anything. So that relates to what I call a "yes, and" philosophy. It's not like we could say no to the allopathic treatments. We had to say yes to those because it was a dire situation, and what else could we do on top of that? So we integrated everything and anything we could think of that would support him through his treatments that would extend his life. He wasn't expected to live to see our son born. He did live to see her son born and he died 2 ½ years later when our son was 19 months old. So that was back in 2002, so I've been a single mom since then. Also remade my career, put myself back through school, built my whole business, and like you said, I have a virtual practice. We have programs for people on the client side of things, but I also teach practitioners around the globe, and that's really my passion. So all of that that I just shared with you also leads into my own health challenges that came about along the way. So as you can imagine, there was a tremendous amount of stress while I was pregnant, and pregnancy in itself is a stress because of the changing hormones that can lead to autoimmune or chronic health conditions when the terrain is right, when we have the right genetics and other factors at play. And for me, there was additional stress because there was this scare and this fear of losing my beloved, my husband, so there was the right conditions to manifest into a later diagnosis of Hashimoto's, which I had to discover myself because nobody was properly identifying it. The field has changed tremendously as you know, Katie, but it was very hard in those days to get a diagnosis and to figure out what to do. And fast forward, here I am, like you, completely managing my own chronic health conditions and teaching others to do the same.

Katie: Yeah, and I know we both have had the thyroid struggles in the past and I want to really define for anyone who's listening. I think the term functional medicine is used a lot, but can you talk about the difference between functional medicine and functional nutrition, and why what you do is so specifically unique?

Andrea: Yeah, I would love to. So, you know, I really want to applaud functional medicine, and what I do is a derivative of those principles. And those principles to me, the primary principles are that we work in partnership, the physician or the practitioner and the patient work in partnership, that we are always looking for the root cause, so we're asking "why", not just "what" so we're not just saying, "Oh, you have this sign, symptom or diagnosis. Here's what you do." Instead we're saying, "Who are you and what do we need to do in this situation for you?" And that we work in systems. And those systems are really about the interconnection of the systems in the body, as well as how we provide systems in which people can think into and take personal care. So one of the things that I always say about functional medicine is that we say, out of those three tenets that I just shared, that the practitioner and the patient work in a therapeutic relationship and partnership, and when we hear that, we applaud the doctor. And I would like to shift that and really applaud the patient and enable the patient to become a partner in their own healthcare, and that's where the realm of

functional nutrition comes in. So I call the practitioners that I train "nutrition and lifestyle practitioners" because we are really helping a patient to alter everything that they do so that they're making a difference in every little way that they can, with what they eat, how they take care of themselves, so they are the hero in their own health journey. So for me, a functional nutritionist is using the principles of functional medicine, but applying them to diet and lifestyle modification and really taking the pause. It's really about a different lens in than our traditional allopathic or conventional way of looking at things in terms of, "Here's the problem. Therefore, here is the solution." We're always asking why. Does that make sense, Katie?

Katie: Yeah, it absolutely does. I think that is definitely a difference with conventional medicine, too, which is much more, of course, geared toward just treating the symptoms. I think that's gonna be hopefully the next wave of really important research and medicine is gonna be finding that root cause, and of course you're already doing it. So, can you kind of take us through your approach with this and how you address this when someone comes in to you?

Andrea: Yeah, absolutely, and I also just want to say that a lot of times, we as patients still apply that type of thinking because it's so kind of...we're so programmed to think about, "Oh, I have this symptom. What's the solution?" that we sometimes apply that even to functional, integrative or holistic care. We still think there's one thing, one person, who's gonna solve all the problems, and that just isn't the way it goes. We actually know ourselves, as patients, better than anyone else so we have a very elaborate system of care in our counseling services where we gather a tremendous amount of information about the individual before we will even make any recommendations. So in our counseling services, the first thing people do once they're in the door is go through a two-part session where they work with an intake specialist who's only creating a functional nutrition timeline. She's not giving any recommendations at all. She's actually collecting more information than we even get from our detailed intake form because we need to stop and we need to pause, and that's kind of the theme of what I want to talk about today with you, Katie, in terms of like what are the hacks? The hack might be in the pause that we need to take to listen in.

So we take that time in our counseling to ask the questions that nobody else is asking, to make the connections that nobody else is making, and often times, our patients gain a tremendous amount of value just from us asking questions that they haven't thought of themselves or nobody's thought to ask them before. That said, I like to take people through, and our thinking is through what I call the three tiers to epigenetic mastery and if I could, I'd like to break that down because we are often thinking about, like I said, what is the solution for this condition or this sign or symptom? And when we're working through a functional nutrition perspective, we're looking for a resolution. Not solution, but resolution, which means we have to dig deeper. In order to do that, that three tiers is very important for us to pay heed to, and epigenetics, just to define that for a minute, is the terrain in which the condition exists. So our genes are wrapped in what are created by the environment, by our lifestyle, by our diet. Everything that surrounds us impacts the genes and the expression of the genes. So when I talk about the three tiers to epigenetic mastery, I'm basically talking about how diet and lifestyle modification can totally shift the terrain in which those signs, symptoms or diagnosis exists. So before I go on, Katie, anything that you have that you want to ask me about before I talk about those three tiers?

Katie: Yeah, let's dive in. And just if you have any specifics related to thyroid. I feel like you and I are both...have been there and also are...kind of that's our approach, so if you can weave in anything related to the thyroid as you go, that would be awesome.

Andrea: Yeah, absolutely. So tier one for me are the non-negotiables, and the non-negotiables are the things that we determine work or don't work for us. So I think as we know and as most people in your community know, Katie, a non-negotiable for those of us with thyroid issues, particularly the Hashimoto's, is the removal of gluten from our diet. So there's enough evidence, there's enough scientific research that shows us the impact of gluten, so that becomes an obvious non-negotiable. For me, other non-negotiables for thyroid health are gonna be the removal of refined sugar because blood sugar management is gonna become very key in our thyroid health because of the connection that those systems, those web of interactions between the hormones. Our non-negotiables are gonna look different for each and every one of us, so some of those are gonna be across the board the same. And in our counseling services, we will not see anybody who's still eating refined sugar, gluten or dairy. If they come in, they have to go through a 25-day elimination diet before they will go into counseling because those are non-negotiables for the type of clients that see us, but our non-negotiables are different. A non-negotiable for me is making sure that I'm in bed and going to sleep by 10:00. 10:00 - 10:30 is my stretch point. You know, by then, I'm starting to compromise my sleep. So we each need to go into that pause and figure out what are our non-negotiables? A non-negotiable may be having family dinner with your family four times a week, at least. It may be going to the gym a certain time. It may be your yoga practice or a massage. Your non-negotiables are unique to you and you need help sometimes figuring out what they are. It may be that you have particular food intolerances or sensitivities and you have to tune in and figure those out. So tier one are the non-negotiables, and they can be in any area and really need to be the things that you know support you, and those are brought in, and those that impact you are taken out. So any questions that you have, Katie, or like that you want to share that you've found are non-negotiables for you?

Katie: Yeah, so I think you're right. It's definitely finding your own, and it was a long process. For me, it was a long process even to get a diagnosis and to get to ground zero to start. But over the years, I now feel like I'm in a place of, I would say, remission. My levels are great. My blood levels are great. I'm even working on tapering off of medication now. But the non-negotiables for are sleep, which is my nemesis. I have the worst time trying to get to sleep just because with six kids, there's always someone working against me.

Andrea: Totally.

Katie: That's a huge one and when I get that right, pretty much everything else falls into place. I also do really well on pretty high doses of omega-3s. And then I'm finding more and more I used to...well, I am very type A and I've always just been kind of like a pedal-to-the-metal person, and just like power through, get done, and I'm learning as I get older the importance of self-care and making time for community and time for rest. So those are probably not the sexiest answers, but the ones that really help me right now that I'm working through.

Andrea: Yeah, and you know, part of what we're talking about today, I worry that it falls into the non-sexy realm, but so many people need this conversation about what it really takes so I'm glad that you brought those up. And totally what you said, those are non-negotiables for you and you've figure them out over time, and it's a process of trial and error where we maybe take something out and then put it in. Or conversely, we put something in like, yes, I'm gonna go get acupuncture every other week and I'm gonna invest in that, and we take it out and we find, oh, you know, I'm not ready to take that out. That was actually very supportive. So all the things in our life and lifestyle that we find become non-negotiables, and figuring those out for ourselves is very key and sometimes, like I said, we need help. A lot of what we do in counseling services is go through that when it's very confusing, and I think of that as clearing the muddy water because oftentimes, we're racing ahead to the next tiers and we are not able to find that sustainable resolution because we bypass clearing the

muddy waters. When we clear the muddy waters, we can actually see what we need to do next. So non-negotiables, we're spending more time there than people might think, and it does a tremendous amount to know those for yourself and to be able to manage your own healthcare in that way.

So tier two is where we're looking at going from deficiency to sufficiency, and that can be a number of things. So if we look at thyroid health, there are a number of nutrients that we know are part of how the thyroid functions. So, factors that contribute to proper production of thyroid hormones include iron and zinc and selenium, and certain vitamins like vitamin E and vitamin B, several of the B vitamins, vitamin C, vitamin D. So those are all areas we could be experiencing deficiencies, but there could be other deficiencies that we experience. We could have a deficiency in certain secretions like stomach acid which actually helps us to break down our proteins, utilize them, and also gain better iron levels so that we're not deficient in iron. There could be deficiency in adrenal hormones. We could be, you know, depleted. Katie, you mentioned six kids and how omega-3s are one of your saviors, one of your non-negotiables. With six kids, you're gonna have depleted yourself of your omega-3s because you're constantly, through pregnancy, giving it away to build that nervous system for your baby, so you repleting those and bringing those levels to sufficiency is both tier one and tier two. So we start to look at, through labs and working with an appropriate practitioner, and also through looking at our own life, like where might we be deficient in love and support and relationships that really fuel us? What are the deficiencies and how do we think about moving those into sufficiency? You know, these can come up in a number of ways, physiologically, like if you have certain genetic snips that you may have heard about like an MTHFR. Where might you be deficient in folate, and how does that affect how you're utilizing your thyroid hormone? It's kind of like a more 3-D perspective on the entire terrain, as opposed to thinking very linearly. Does that resonate, Katie?

Katie: Yes, absolutely.

Andrea: Yeah, great. So again, Tier one are the non-negotiables, and for thyroid health, we need to think about what's in the diet, what's inflammatory. I can't eat eggs. I can't eat cow dairy. You know it takes time to figure that out. Some people can't eat nuts and seeds. I can eat nuts and seeds. You have to figure out, can you eat nightshades? Can you not eat nightshades? Those are all part of the terrain that we need to figure out in our non-negotiables. Deficiencies, some of them you might be able to think of on your own, and some of them you might need to be working with a practitioner to understand, am I deficient in vitamin D? And wow, vitamin D is a factor that contributes to the production of my thyroid hormones and it's helping me to manage my immune health, and those are contributing to my thyroid or Hashimoto's health, so where is that a deficiency that needs to be addressed? And I just want to go back here to saying that the "yes, and" situation is okay. A lot of times in the holistic or integrative spaces, we're anti-medication. We think that maybe we failed because we need medication, and I really think it's a whole picture and that's why as a functional medicine nutritionist, I'm looking at diet and lifestyle, but I'm not saying food is the resolution and I'm doing the same thing the doctor is doing, but with food. It sometimes is a partnership and we need different practitioners to bring in what they're able to do, to address deficiencies, to address non-negotiables, to manage a situation. So I just want to make sure that nobody feels less than if their body needs some kind of help that is coming from a prescription.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's a good point, and one that functional medicine is excellent at is that holistic approach and not ever the blame or the judgment, just finding the root causes and addressing those gently and carefully, so I think that's an excellent point.

Andrea: Yeah, it's really important that we look at the whole picture, and there are certain medications that I'm not gonna condone or I'm gonna worry about, and sometimes we even need those as scaffolding or a steppingstone to be able to manage a situation. So wherever you are in your journey, I just want to applaud everybody for listening in for the self-care and for looking for "Where is my next step. What do I need to do next?" And I hope that this lens helps, that we're able to say, "Wait a minute. Let me just stop and think. Have I addressed all my non-negotiables and are there any deficiencies that I need to be thinking about?" And again, going back to thyroid health, selenium and zinc, as I'm sure you've talked about many times, Katie, those are two nutrients that are key for our thyroid production and also helping us convert the inactive thyroid hormone T4 to the active thyroid hormone T3. We also want to think about cellular sensitivity. We have thyroid receptors in all of our cells, and things like vitamin A and again zinc help with that cellular sensitivity, and so does exercise. So just thinking about what are the things that we can be doing to help our bodies deal with the deficiencies that may be a part of the expression of the symptoms. Instead of just saying, "I have this symptom. Let me put a Band-Aid on it." It's asking why, so keeping coming back to these principles.

The third tier in the three tiers to epigenetic mastery is where we start to dismantle the dysfunction, and for me, that dysfunction is really about what we might call the infection, and this is the stage that a lot of people are jumping to first and foremost. Oh, I have H Pylori or I have Candida or have Giardia, or you know, any other infection that...Epstein-Barr. We're seeing these different infections and we think, "Go right for that." There are times when we need to go right for that and really address it, but we also need to be thinking about tier one and tier two. And what I want to say here is that when we bypass tier one and tier two, it's very hard for the body to sustain the remedies that we're bringing in because it's not yet in balance. The terrain has not been addressed so that whatever the solution is that's being brought in can stick. So what I'm talking about here is really like we're tending to the soil in which the roots are growing. If we just try to heal the roots and we haven't addressed the soil, it's very hard for the body to stick in that place. So when we think about dysfunction, it's really where disease starts from. So we can think about triggers or precipitating events, and that's what leads to an appearance of a diagnosis. So, those dysfunctions are those infections and they do need to be addressed, but we need to think about them in a terrain, and sometimes the good news is that if we deal with tier one and tier two, the body can actually fight the infection on its own, which is pretty darn cool because our bodies are meant to do that. And sometimes we need help addressing the infection, but we're gonna be better able to do that when we have addressed that terrain, that soil, that tier one, tier two environment. So, those are the three tiers I think about, and I really encourage everybody who's working with any thyroid issues to stop and think about where you are with making sure that the whole environment has been addressed.

Katie: That's great and I think you're right. I think so often, people want to just jump into their three, to the solutions and the big needle movers and they don't do the foundational work that makes the big difference. And I know maybe a lot people listening, this was certainly the case for me. It's hard to find a practitioner to work with, especially in a lot of areas like where I live.

Katie: This podcast is brought to you by Four Sigmatic. If you follow me on Instagram, you've probably seen me mention them because I have been using and loving and Instagramming their products for years. They have an amazing instant mushroom coffee. Hear me out before you think it's weird. I know, mushroom coffee doesn't sound good. It's not only the best instant coffee I've ever tried, it's also pretty high up on the list of best coffee I've tried. It's cheaper than coffee shop coffee and it's so convenient because it's so portable and it

tastes so much better. But it isn't just ordinary coffee. It has super food mushrooms like Lion's Mane, Cordyceps, and Chaga mushrooms. And these mushrooms have some big health benefits, and especially immune benefits. I personally, especially love them for the energy and the mental clarity without the jitters from traditional coffee. And did I mention how good it tastes? So I always take these instant coffee packets with me when I travel, and I also always drink it at home these days now that they have a big tin that lasts about a month so I don't have to open a little packet every day.

Some friends of ours recently traveled for three months carrying only the backpacks on their backs, and they brought an entire three months supply of this instant coffee in their bag that had limited space. In other words, this coffee beat out a pair of jeans for how important it was to make it in the bag. It's that good. And, of course, if you aren't a caffeine person, they also have a variety of mushroom tea and other products that don't have the coffee so you can get the benefits without the caffeine. And I love them so much that I reached out and they agreed to give a discount to my listeners. So go to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and use the code "WELLNESSMAMA" to get 10% off. That's Four Sigmatic, F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/wellnessmama.

This episode is sponsored by Kettle and Fire Bone Broth. If you love the benefits of bone broth but don't love the time it takes to make and how tough it can be to find quality bones to make broth, Kettle and Fire is for you. Their bone broth is a regular staple in my kitchen these days and it's what I use to create the recipes in my new bone broth ebook. So they only use bones from 100% grass-fed pasture raised cattle that are never given hormones or antibiotics. Their broth is also unique because they focus on bones that are especially high in collagen, which is one of the healthiest things you can put in your body. You can find them at many Whole Foods on the west coast and you can also order online and get a discount at kettleandfire.com/mama. Again, that's kettleandfire.com/mama.

Katie: So let's get really practical for a while. Can you walk through how you would...like how someone could go about finding their own non-negotiables and their own solutions for deficiencies, even if they don't live in an area where they can work with someone one-on-one? I know you have a lot of information that you've written about this, and I'll link to a lot of those, but let's talk through some of the practical steps that people can take.

Andrea: Yeah, absolutely. And I do want to say that we work with people across the globe. My clinic is completely virtual and there are other functional practitioners who work like this as well, so there are people out there to help you if you're looking for somebody to hold your hand. And I really believe that there's a lot we could be tracking on our own, and sometimes I get my hand slapped, Katie, for like talking about tracking. Like it's too much trouble for people to do it, but there's so much information that comes when we start to capture this information, and one thing I like to do is track food, "mood" and poop, and mood is something I put in quotations because it's really any sign or symptom that comes up. And I encourage patients to do this very objectively, so we're not getting super analytical. We're just capturing information to begin with. Sometimes I will have people just start listing out your food, what you ate in a day, and I'm not looking for quantities. I'm just looking for what is it. The next thing we can do from there to get kind of playful is take out our colored pens or markers and go through five days of tracking our food, and actually circle or highlight what colors we ate in a day because some of those deficiencies that we may be experiencing can be coming from a limited diet. So these healing diets that many of us go on aren't meant to last long-term. We're not meant to

be on them for a long time. If we are on a healing diet for a long time, there's likely internal healing and work that needs to be done that hasn't yet been done, and that might be where you need some practitioner support. But taking out those pens, those highlighters, and looking at am I getting enough Fido nutrients in my diet? Am I getting enough color in my diet? Because again, those help with the oxidative stress that can be leading to inflammation. They help with taming the inflammation in the many ways, and they help with some of the nutrients, the minerals that we need for cellular health. So, that's step one. You know, just track your food, not something...you know, it doesn't seem like it's mind blowing, but it can be. I'm always surprised when I go back and do some food-mood-poop tracking. There's a lot of improvement that I can make that I don't think I could make when I'm just doing my normal everyday thing. Have you ever found that yourself, Katie?

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. I think that the data is really helpful and I think often, our perception of what we're doing or what we're eating is different than the reality, especially when we're busy.

Andrea: Yeah, totally. And you know, I know what it's like to be busy and you do, too. The next thing I would encourage people to do as they're building their way through is to track your poop, and I like to say that poop is one of our biggest diagnostic tools that we have access to right there. It tells us a lot. So I'm not telling you to go fishing into the bowl, but take a look after you go to the bathroom and if you do that in relation to "what am I eating in a day and when do I poop," then you learn a lot about yourself and you also gather more information to take to a practitioner. So with thyroid health, we often have people who are experiencing constipation because it affects metabolism all the way through the body, and so a lot of people are having constipation. Some people also are having diarrhea. There's things we can do there to help the system, and it's also very telling. So, tracking your food, tracking your poop, noticing if there's any significant changes that happen in relation to what you eat. If you have a green smoothie that has more fiber in it, do you have a better elimination than if you have bone broth in the morning? You know, you start to just be able to see "what is it that is true for me," because we're each different, and what anybody says is the perfect breakfast may not be the perfect breakfast for you. So tracking your food and your poop, and then I started to add in what I call "mood," and mood isn't just how you feel. It's kind of the mood of your body, which is why put it in quotes. So any sign or symptom that you may experience through the day, and as we start to keep a food-mood-poop journal...and again, just objectively capture information. This isn't about navel-gazing. It's about tracking and then stepping back and seeing what we might be able to detect from that information, based on that objectivity, or being able to take that information to a practitioner who is able to work with that. That's gonna be a huge tool. So we actually won't see people at the recommendation part of counseling without looking at a food-mood-poop journal because it tells us so much. I can't believe how much information I get from a patient's journaling. Even if they don't know that they're capturing any detail that's relevant to me, it does tell us a lot. And for you as a patient, just tracking and seeing if you can derive any information or any trends or clues from the pattern is a tremendous up-leveling of your patterns of behavior. Do you have any questions around that, Katie, that I didn't speak into?

Katie: No, that's great, and I think you're right that just sometimes having an awareness about something and paying attention to it. Like someone struggling with a health problem, they may notice something that was there all along that they weren't really looking for. I want to mention you do have an e-book about this food-mood-poop challenge, and there will be a link to that in the show notes for anyone. It's a free book that they can use to track this. Is that right?

Andrea: Yeah, absolutely, and it walks us through that process a little bit more and why and what we might be

looking for. So yeah, I'd love everybody to get their hands on that, and we will have a link to it.

Katie: And so obviously everything is...definitely there's a personalized aspect, but are there things, especially in the realm of thyroid, that you're seeing most commonly or that people could maybe be on the lookout for in their own lives and their own health?

Andrea: Definitely nutrient depletion has I think come up a lot. So we tend to see what we call the big bigs, and lately we're saying the huge bigs. So these are people who have big health issues and they've already taken a lot of steps and a lot of effort, so they're not eating gluten or sugar or dairy. In fact, they may come in eating three foods because that's all their stomach can tolerate. And what I want to say is that these, like I said before, these limited diets actually lead to more nutrient depletion and can cause more health challenges because every cell in our body needs a diversity of nutrients coming in all the time. This is why diet and lifestyle matter in order to heal, so it's impossible for the body to do its work and find homeostasis in a deprived environment with deprived intake. So one of the things I see a lot, Katie, is that people are limiting their food out of fear. They're limiting their food because they're worried about symptoms or because the underlying root cause of the symptoms in response to the food has not been addressed. So they're saying, you know, "I've done this and this helps a little bit, but I'm still not feeling my best, but I better not bring anything in." And I'm not saying to bring in the things that are most offensive to your particular system, but we do need a diet that has more diversity. So that's one thing I really just want to put out there, especially to your audience, Katie, who's more advanced and more further along in the conversation, is that nutrient depletion is something we see a lot in this population of advanced health advocates, you know, self-health advocates. Also, let me just think in terms of like what else are we seeing in terms of food-mood-poop tracking? I think you're saying we think we're eating healthier. I often see not enough fibrous vegetables, not enough plant proteins, so we like to think of the most healing diet as sort of a plant-powered Paleo or a plant-powered Paleo-Mediterranean-type diet with then nuances that are specific for the individual, and always bringing back whatever we can and whatever the body will tolerate. So I think we deceive ourselves a lot. I think we may not really connect what's happening in our bodies with what we're doing, and then on the flip side, I think sometimes we take it too far and live there for too long. Do you see that coming up a lot in your community?

Katie: I do, yeah. I think you're right, and I think that tracking is the key to that. Even on an unrelated note, I know just ever since I started really tracking my menstrual cycle...we use natural family planning so it was something I had to do, but I have learned so much about my health from the symptoms related to that that I never paid attention to before. So I think sometimes just the tracking and keeping a log can open a lot of doors you didn't even know were there.

Andrea: I love that you said that, and there's two other trackers I want to talk about but, you brought up such a good one. And for me, I did natural family planning to get pregnant back when I was talking about when my husband and I were trying to get pregnant. It took a little while and for me, this is before I was a practitioner. I was in a completely different field. And it was tracking my cycle and learning about how my cycle worked that was the key to being able to get pregnant. And what happened there, which I think is always interesting for me to think back on as a practitioner, is I learned what was going on in my body. And I think as patients, we're so distant from what is actually happening inside of us that we're just living at the sign and symptom level or diagnosis level, but we're not actually saying, "Oh, this is my thyroid. This is where it is. This is how it works. This is how it actually hits and functions the rest of my body. This is why I'm experiencing that symptom in relation to having this diagnosis." So I actually think a physiological understanding, to a point, to a point of understanding like what's going on in our bodies is incredibly beneficial for us. So we're tracking, but then

we're asking ourselves why, and if we get to work with somebody who can explain it and educate us without going overboard into crazy biochemistry, unless that floats our boat, then it's super helpful, and the natural family planning I think is a great example of that. I couldn't believe how much I didn't know about my cycle when I started doing that.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. I feel like you do learn so much. And there are so many great resources. I'll link to the ones I use, and I know you have some resources on this as well, but it's so much easier than it used to be. Like my mom actually has done that for year and back in the day, it was paper charts writing down.

Andrea: Yes, that's how I did it.

Katie: Yeah, and me too in the beginning. And now there are apps and there are all kinds of fertility trackers that make it more accurate and easier, and that help you have even more data. I would love for you to talk about the other trackers you use, and I'll just mention another one that has been eye-opening for me, and that's just buying a blood sugar monitor at a drug store and taking my blood sugar. It's fascinating. Things you would think would spike your blood sugar for you, personally, may not, and vice versa. I could pretty much eat sweet potatoes forever and it won't raise my blood sugar, but certain fruits do. So what other health trackers do you use?

Andrea: Well, that's one of our favorites because for me, that's a non-negotiable. Blood sugar management for our thyroid health is key. So, when we think about the cascade of hormones, I always think, you know, insulin and blood sugar are at the base. If we don't have that dialed in, it's very hard to build what I call the house of cards on top of that, so blood sugar monitoring is a great tracker. And we have an entire program where we help people manage their blood sugar and look at it because sometimes people make assumptions like, "Oh, I'm hypoglycemic," when that's not the case at all, and we wouldn't know that unless we used the blood sugar monitor and did some tracking. So in that cascade of hormones, I always think of it as insulin adrenal hormones, thyroid hormone, and then the sex hormones on top of that. So if we don't have the blood sugar and the adrenals dialed in, it's hard in terms of our non-negotiables and our deficiencies to get the thyroid to do its thing. We actually have some back-it-up work to do. So my other favorite trackers, in addition to those that we talked about, are a supplement tracker and a lab tracker. And the supplement tracker is one where I ask patients to track what they're taking, the dosing, why they brought it in, who recommended it, and if they notice that it's doing a difference for them because a lot of times, people are bringing in remedies that they've learned from conversations like we're having or online summits or books that they're reading, and it may not apply to them, but they're taking it anyway. And patients often come in taking a ton of supplements that are maybe confusing the terrain more than they're helping. So our goal is to make sure that we're working with very clean supplements and that they're the ones that your body needs, not the ones that you read about or that seem like they're the perfect hack for dealing with your Hashimoto's, but that are your perfect hack, and that may take some time and some support to figure out. So a supplement tracker is key because I don't know about you, Katie, but I see people taking a lot of supplements that aren't necessarily appropriate for their situation.

Katie: Yeah, definitely. There's even a couple of those in my family that it's like they keep reading all of this literature about supplements...which I think is super important. I think everybody should be researching and learning all the time, but they just keep adding to the list and so they end up taking all of them instead of evaluating and seeing what's working and what's not. And I mentioned for me, omega-3s and vitamin D also make a huge difference, like absolutely non-negotiables, but for someone else, I'm sure depending on gut

bacteria and gene mutations and everything else, big doses of vitamin D or omega-3s could be harmful. So I think it's so key to know what you're taking and know what it is affecting.

Andrea: Yeah, in terms of what I would say are my non-negotiables, you know, my baseline, my signature supplements, there's always gonna be vitamin D, but that's gonna depend on levels and lab testing. Omega-3s and again, what somebody can tolerate, is unique. B vitamins, a complex of methylated B vitamins, but that's hugely independent. Somebody who has genetic mutations may need to come at that in a very particular way, so we can't just say, "Oh, everybody should take high-dose methylated B vitamins," and same with probiotics, which is my fourth signature thing that I would be looking at. What somebody can tolerate and what their body needs is going to be unique, so even though I have signature nutrients that I'm bringing in, how we bring them in and how they support the individual is very unique, and this comes back to the principles of functional medicine and functional nutrition. It's not just "what is the condition?" It's who are you who has this condition or this sign or symptom? And that's then where we back up and look at what's required for your body. So that supplement tracking is something I have people do to kind of take stock and to have a conversation around what have you brought in, why?

And in addition to reading and doing research, people are often self-diagnosing with conditions that are related to a sign or symptom that they're experiencing. I have concern about that. So it's researching, but sometimes we need partners to be able to ask, "Is this the right thing for me and my body?" And the final tracker that I wanted to talk about, as I mentioned, is a lab tracker. And I think it's really important for us as patients to watch our markers, even if we don't know what they mean, to track the trends so that we can see, is something moving up or down? How am I doing with the hacks that I'm bringing in, with the things that I'm doing for myself? Are things moving in the right direction? Is this something I should ask my support team, my practitioners, about? So I like to have people take charge of that tracking because it brings some awareness to a situation that we otherwise blindly hand over to the person who we put our care in their hands, and I like to give patients back the power and get back in the driver's seat. So, even if you don't know what it means, you're taking those numbers and you're putting them onto a sheet so that it gives you the pause to be able to look at them.

Katie: Absolutely, and I would say also, my encouragement would be to research those from sources that you trust and that you know have the more functional medicine side because that's one of the things I had to do with my thyroid is I kept getting lab tests that doctors were telling me were normal, and if you look at it...of course, the ranges of normal are defined by people who get the test, and people who get the test often suspect they have a problem and many times do. And so realizing that what's in the normal range on a blood test that you get at a regular lab may not be the actual optimal levels, and that seems especially true with vitamin D. I have said this before, but I had blood tests a long time ago that said I was completely fine, and then the normal range of vitamin D in my numbers were in the 20s. A lot of practitioners say like, you know, 60 and up is good.

Andrea: Yes. Yeah, 50 to 80 is where I would say...you know, I deal with vitamin D. So yeah, we have to be looking at "what are these numbers and what the functional level?" By functional, we mean this is where the body actually functions the best.

Katie: Exactly, and that's quite a difference from the normal. And considering the state of health in our country, I don't think anyone really wants to be normal anymore. And a question that I love that maybe like kind of brings together everything we're talked about, and I think you will answer it in an exceptional way, is

what are three things that you think people really don't understand when it comes to functional medicine and health, and especially in your area of expertise, and how do you answer those?

Andrea: Yeah, that's a great question, and I think this answer may not make me so popular or may be...fall into the realm that you were talking about, Katie, where like maybe this isn't so sexy. So I think that when we're looking for root cause resolution, we have to recognize that it takes commitment, that it actually takes tracking and stepping back, and kind of moving into that pause and knowing that there is no one-size-fits-all. And just to kind of double-click on that thought for a moment, I'm always a little shocked that we are so celebratory of the whole notion of individuality in our culture that, you know, we have our Spotifys that are unique to us and people buy bras in half sizes because we're unique, or our jeans or our bed mattresses that form to the contour of our body, but when it comes to our health, we are still looking for the one-size-fits-all approach and it just doesn't exist. There are things that are true for all of us, I'm not gonna deny that, but science is way far ahead of us. Science is talking about the fact that the makeup of the gene in the individual matters more than the diagnosis. So if we take a diagnosis like cancer, you can put a cell in...two people can have breast cancer, but it doesn't matter where those cancers exist. It matters how those cells behave, and that tells us a lot more information than where it is. So toward that end, just because we both have thyroid issues, doesn't mean we're gonna respond to the same things. Again, there are some things that may fall into the non-negotiables that are true for all of us, like we talked about with diet and nutrients, but then we do get down to that specificity, and that takes commitment. So that's number one that I want to say.

Number two is that it takes time, not just time in tracking, but that the condition, like I said, the dysfunction came about because a number of factors, not just one thing. Disease, again, starts with dysfunction and dysfunction can occur on multiple levels: physiological, physical, cognitive, psychological, spiritual. There's a number of things that happened in your life, which is why we spend time on that timeline that all added up in a confluence to tip the scales to lead to the signs, symptoms, or diagnosis that you're experiencing. And therefore, it takes time to look at and address those things, and that's okay. As long as you're in a process, it's okay, and that process sometimes looks like forward momentum, but it actually goes up and down and there may be places where you have a flare or where it feels like a step back. And you take each of those opportunities to learn and move forward. What did that experience tell me? So, number one, it takes commitment. Number two, it takes time because this didn't manifest overnight, and number three, I really want to say that from my area of research and expertise, you the patient are the hero on your healthcare team. There is no one pill, protocol, or practitioner who's gonna solve all your problems. You are the one who actually has more influence over what happens in your life. You are the hero and if you look at the hero's journey and what it takes, you may need a guide. You may need several guides, but it's your journey and you're already on it, and you're already on the hero's journey getting to where you need to go. So those are three things that, like I said, may not be so sexy, but I have seen in all of the people, thousands of people that I've been able to work with, that I've had the privilege to work with, that this is the process that really works for root cause resolution.

Katie: I think that last point is so key, that in your health, you can't outsource it. It's one of those things that you truly have to do yourself and you're the one who's putting in the effort. And no one is gonna care as much about your health, or should, as you do, and I think that becoming your own advocate and your own researcher and, in some ways, your own scientist is a big part of the key. And you can use, like you said, tools from many different things and many different supplements or whatever it ends up being for you, but becoming your own advocate and taking ownership for that is so, so important and I love that you brought that up. And for anyone who wants to connect with you, where can they find you online? I'll of course have

links in the show notes, especially to the e-book that we mentioned, but where people find you?

Andrea: Yeah, I welcome people visiting us at replenishPDX.com, and if you are interested in counseling, or even if you want these tools that I talked about, you can go to replenishPDX.com/counseling and we do share with you and email the food-mood-poop journal, the supplement tracker, and the lab tracker. The e-book, the food-mood-poop e-book, which you can get at replenishPDX.com/wellnessmama, is gonna walk through that process in more detail. So, a few different places, all you can link back to [replenishPDX](http://replenishPDX.com). If there are any practitioners listening, that's really the biggest thing I do. I've trained thousands of practitioners. I like to call them allied functional medicine practitioners in the science and art of the functional nutrition practice. That school is called Holistic Nutrition Lab. We've trained practitioners now in over 50 countries, which is really exciting at this point that we are a movement, you know, really taking storm and making a change in how we practice medicine by filling the gap, as I like to see it. There's a gap between the patient and even the functional medicine doctor, and we fill that gap. So that's holisticnutritionlab.com. So there are some resources where you can easily find me and what we're doing online.

Katie: Thank you, and like I said, I'll link to those in the show notes. And I also wanted to just speak to what you said in the beginning. We jumped right into the science and the health. But I also just wanted to say that you are such an inspiration and I'm so sorry for the loss of your husband, but so grateful for all that you do in the world and for the beauty that you've brought out of that. So, thank you for your research, for your time, and for being here today.

Andrea: Thank you so much, Katie. I really appreciate it and thank you for having me here with your community.

Katie: Thank you, and thanks to all of you for listening, and 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.