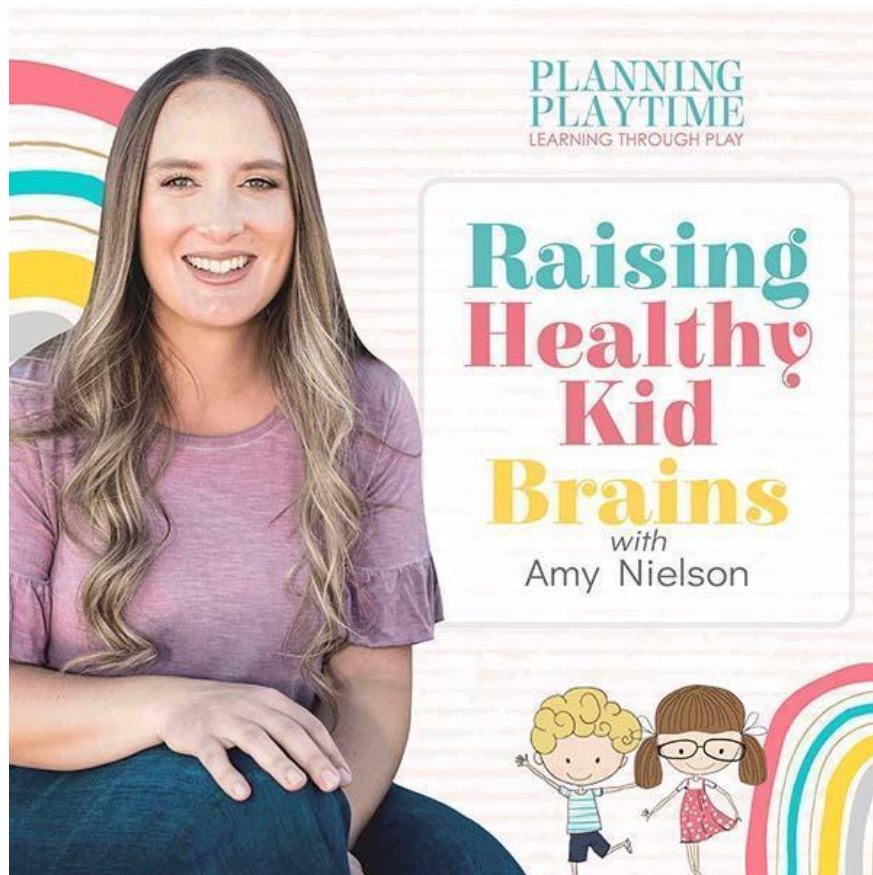


Ep #106: Simple Shifts for a Healthier Home with Stefanie Adler



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Amy Nielson

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Has your child ever experienced any kind of stomach discomfort or pain, or have they even had issues with dry skin? If that is you, then you are going to love today's episode. I'm talking with Stefanie Alder, who is a functional diagnostic nutritionist. She's going to tell you what that means and what she does for her job.

But basically, we talk about how so many of these issues that children are having, and indeed, there's about 54% of children who now have chronic illnesses. And we're going to talk about how to heal so many of those things, actually using food and removing toxins. It was a fascinating conversation. So many good, practical pieces of advice.

I have a lot of buy-in on this personally because I was a child that struggled with stomach discomfort, and then as an adult had even increasing problems with it. I had to go off of dairy and gluten for an extended period of time. But before that, going for years and years with doctors not being able to tell me what was wrong and people, even when I was a child, maybe parents wondering if I was making it up because they just didn't know. They didn't have the information.

And then finding solutions to that and actually being able to make some adjustments in my diet that healed my body to a point where I can now enjoy things I couldn't eat for 10 years. I can eat them now, like dairy and gluten. And I'm fine. I don't have the same issues. I don't have the same problems and challenges. And then just, in general, eating a very healthy diet and how I don't get sick almost ever, and my children are fairly healthy.

So I love this topic. I think it's so valuable. The things that Stefanie talked about today are incredible. One of my favorite things I want you to watch out for is the app she talks about for this game of removing toxins. What are the most toxic things in your household and her simple solution for switching them out?

Some of the foods that she says are the top foods that your kids should be eating and getting those into your diet. We talked about school lunches versus home lunches and how to do that. We talked about how to make it simple and faster. We talked about the cost-effectiveness of making some of these changes. It was a fantastic conversation, and it's all coming up right after this.

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Welcome to the *Raising Healthy Kid Brains* podcast, where moms and teachers come to learn all about kids' brains, how they work, how they learn, how they grow, and simple tips and tricks for raising the most resilient, kind, smart, compassionate kids we can. All while having lots of grace and compassion for ourselves, because, you know what? We all really need and deserve that, too. I am your host, Amy Nielson, let's get ready to start the show.

Amy Nielson: Stefanie Adler, welcome to the show.

Stefanie Adler: Hi, Amy. I'm so excited to be here. Thank you for having me.

Amy: Yeah, I am so excited because I think that all of us want to be like better about nutrition. We want healthy kids. We want to have healthy selves, right? We want health all over the place, and it's so important. And so I'm really excited about this conversation and how to do that with using food that we already have and just some different things and changes we can make in our households. This is going to be such a great conversation. Before we get into all that, though, you are a functional diagnostic nutritionist. Tell me what that is, right? Tell us what that is for those of us that aren't sure exactly what that means.

Stefanie: Totally. And so, I mean, and I'll speak to a little bit of like how my approach specifically as an individual is maybe different than either other, you know, functional practitioners that people have worked with or seen on Instagram, things like that. But so, essentially what it is to be a functional diagnostic nutritionist is to pay attention to what is at the root. Not just band-aiding symptoms, but understanding that symptoms are a way of our bodies communicating with us. And if we truly listen, it's not to cover them up and band-aid solution them, but to address why those symptoms are happening in the first place by looking for root causes.

My line of work is really about taking like the information that we're getting from your body and also utilizing amazing technological advances in modern science like functional lab tests, alongside with food diaries and other things to really give us insight into, well, what is a block to someone experiencing optimal wellness in their body? How do we remove that block and then allow the body to

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heal itself? And it's really such an amazing way to work with your body. And then when you're working with your body like that, truly anything becomes possible.

Amy: Oh my gosh. Okay, can I just speak to this a little bit before we get into it? Because I've seen the power of this and I've spoken to so many parents, right? Or even us adults, right? Who are saying, there's something wrong, I don't know what it is. I've gone to this doctor, I've gone to this doctor. I've tried this, this, this, this, and this, right? And we just don't have any answers, and I don't know what's wrong, and I'm broken forever kind of a thing. And I remember years ago, having like stomach issues for years. And I was talking to an internist, right? And a gastroenterologist and telling them all my things and they're like, well, you know, and they just had nothing really to help me. Like they just couldn't come up with anything.

And then seeing someone who was kind of like doing a few lab tests but more kind of digging into, okay, what could be causing this? And then the experience of finding out that I had some food sensitivities, going off of them for several years and kind of healing some other stuff in my life. And then, oh my gosh, you know, I went for years with not being able to eat dairy or gluten or things like that, right? And now, like, I can have it again. So I don't like go crazy, but my body's fine now. Like it healed. Like my body literally healed.

So, I'm a believer in this stuff and it's so amazing, and I'm so excited to talk about it today with you. This is going to be so good. Okay, so can you without like going super deep into your personal story, just kind of tell us like how you got into this, like what made you passionate about this?

Stefanie: Yeah, so I actually was a kid with stomach issues. And my parents say that I had like digestive issues from the time they brought me home from the hospital when I was born. And, you know, it's funny like I look at old pictures of myself and of course like I had a happy childhood, but there's also like a lot of pictures of like family gatherings and stuff where I'm just like on the side like, "Hmph." Because like my stomach hurt so much and I was like always having digestive issues. And so my parents, similar story to you, you know, what you were talking about where like the doctors were kind of just like, we can't really help you. I had been going to all these doctors at a young age and, you know, I

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actually found out as an adult that my gastro told my mom that she thought I was making it up for attention.

Because I just truly refused to accept that this was my life. And they were telling me at, you know, 10, 11, 12 years old like you just have IBS. We can't find anything else wrong with you. You're going to have to live like this forever. They gave me a few medications that the side effects were worse than my stomach aches and I was just like, this doesn't have to be my reality. So at the ripe age of 12 going on 13, I changed my diet despite my doctors telling me that it wouldn't help, walking down Whole Foods aisles, like, I don't know, I'm literally 12 and 13 in the American South. And this was a long time ago before gluten-free was really a thing. And by changing my diet, symptoms I had been having for 13 years went away in a few months.

And it totally just set me off on this trajectory of food as medicine or food can be catalyst for dis-ease in the body. And then I, you know, deepened that knowledge over time, went to school for it, you know, all the things, but really, really, really am so passionate, especially as a person who was a child who didn't feel well. I mean, 54% of children today have chronic health conditions. And this is a serious epidemic and it makes me so sad how many pediatricians just like, "Eh, whatever, it's childhood, you know, there's nothing we can do about it when we know that's not true."

Amy: Okay, I'm so excited to get into this because I remember I was the kid in my family. There's 12 kids in my family by the way. There's a lot of us. And when I was young, I would get stomach aches and it's still like the family joke, like my stomach aches. I actually would describe it as like, we called it the hot belly, cold back thing, because that's like - I just that was in my like words as a four, like five-year-old, that's how I could describe it to people. And they thought I was making it up, like they did, because it was so weird and I didn't have better words for it. I didn't understand it, right?

But I remember, yeah, like having to leave the family gathering and trying to go outside and trying to feel better like with my stomach, but then I was too cold and trying to like negotiate this and doing everything I could think of to try to feel better as like a five-year-old, right? And not being able to really - you know what

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I mean? And so it's just interesting because this has been around for a while and of course, it seems to be getting worse. I don't know. It feels like I'm hearing about it more and more.

And so what can we do, right? Because you don't just go to the doctor because your child has like a hot belly cold back, like how do you even say about that, right? So how do we get into this? I'm so excited to talk about this and get into this and what we can do and like what are some things to look for and just how to help our kids feel better and ourselves really. So let's talk about like early warning signs that like kids' immune systems might be compromised or like what kinds of things should we be watching for to know that there might be something wrong?

Stefanie: Yeah. So again, like I mentioned, symptoms are the body's way of communicating with us. And it doesn't mean that like I'm telling you to go to see your doctor every time you see like a tiny bit of redness on your baby's face, you know, like obviously we're using some innate intelligence here. And a lot of times, and this is a little bit controversial, but I really believe that like moms are the best doctors and that, you know, grandparents and that people who are close to our children, like we are the best people to advocate for our children's bodies. And so, I'm really not encouraging people to run to the doctor with these tiny symptoms, but it doesn't mean that we dismiss them. We do want to pay attention.

So anything that's going up on the skin, I feel like is one of those early warning signs when it comes to, hey, there's something going on in the gut because anytime we're seeing something in the skin, it typically means that there's like some sort of leaky gut situation or something going on in the gut that isn't optimal, plus usually some sort of like toxic burden. And that is partially why we're seeing so much more of these cases today is because our world, even despite some of our best efforts at making our homes safe spaces, our world has a lot of toxins in it and our systems have become less resilient over time due to things like overuse of antibiotics, less diversity in the gut that's promote good motility and the detoxification systems. So anytime you're seeing anything come up on the skin, rashes, eczema, things like that can be a sign that, hey,

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something might be going on underneath that we need a little bit of additional support.

Similarly, irregularities when it comes to bowel movements. So whether that's not going frequently or, you know, sometimes even for little kids it can be things, you know, like mucus in the stool or, you know, just any sort of like sign that it isn't a perfectly healthy or normal poop, a lot of undigested food in stool once kids are a little bit older or on the opposite side of having a slow motility, i.e., like not going enough or having like, you know, hard constipated poops, maybe it's they're going very frequently or it's very loose and their transit time is maybe a little bit too fast.

So I would say those are like the two biggest things to look for. And then another one that I also pay attention to is how frequently is my child getting sick, right? Whether that's, you know, a cold, a stomach bug, whatever, and how quickly are they recovering? You know, despite what a lot of people think, like it is not normal to have a runny nose all winter. Like that is maybe common but not normal. Similarly, you know, I hear from a lot of, you know, parents where they're like, "Well, my doctor says that it's, you know, normal for my kid who's in daycare to get sick once or twice a month." That's still a lot of illness and it's not normal.

Amy: Yeah, that's a lot. Okay, so that's really interesting. So skin, I hadn't really thought about that one, but we're watching skin and I think a lot of us see signs of, you know, we're like, "Is this eczema or whatever?" Is there something to be said for seasonality with that? Like during the winter, we live in the desert. My kid's skin tends to get more dry. Do I need to be as sensitive to that? Like if it's it seems to be more seasonal, or is that just kind of like, "If there's skin stuff, then there might be signs of gut issues?"

Stefanie: I mean, it's likely that everyone has like a little bit of a gut issue. Like I think it's also just important for us to name that like doesn't mean you necessarily have to go down this like rabbit hole, healing, you know, intense journey, but that there are probably ways to give it a little bit of support. And I would say even season, I mean a little bit of dry skin in the winter maybe is a

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call for the body like, hey, I need more healthy fats or I need more of that like deep nourishment in terms of what is also moisturizing internally.

Like I think it could be a seasonal ask for change in terms of my nutrient needs as well. So if it's only just like coming up a little bit in the winter, I wouldn't ignore it and I wouldn't just be like, "Oh, it's cold outside, therefore we have dry skin." But it wouldn't necessarily be like if we're getting a little bit of dryness in the winter that I'm going to, you know, immediately do all these tests on my kid.

Amy: Go and do labs. Okay, so that is fascinating. You're saying that dry skin, even if it's kind of just seasonal, could be like we could help our bodies with that by just eating more healthy fats?

Stefanie: Yeah.

Amy: That is so interesting because I'm like, lotion, what's the best lotion? You know, whatever. Like that's how I've been trained. But oh my goodness, starting on it from the inside and then water, you know, I'm like, drink more water, kids, drink more water, but healthy fats. That's so fascinating.

Stefanie: Yeah, and so a couple things that come up with that is the first one, I mean if we think about what are like the OG lotions, right? Tallow, right? Things that are fat in and of themselves. Even, you know, around the world today that I mean I use tallow on my skin still. In Africa, they use cocoa butter, shea butter, things like that. All of those are fatty in and of themselves. And so what helps externally also helps internally. And so most people I find are not eating enough healthy fats and are eating too many fats that are not biologically appropriate for our bodies.

And so, you know, increasing things like lard, butter, bone marrow, other like duck fat, you know, chicken fat, things like that is so, so amazing and beneficial for our skin, also for our internal organs, which then are reflected in our skin and beyond. And then one thing I'll also just say about water, I see this all the time too. We're just all guzzling water, but if we're not getting it with appropriate minerals, it can actually be dehydrating. And so it's so important to be drinking mineralized liquids and this applies to our kids. It's such an interesting thing for me.

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You know, a lot of the work that I do with women, they're like so into it and they're like, "Wow, I feel so good when I eat X, Y, and Z for breakfast. And I feel so good when I'm putting all these minerals in my water." And then it's like we aren't doing it for our children. And like our children benefit from these exact same things. And so putting some salt and trace minerals in your children's water will dramatically transform how well their body is able to stay hydrated.

Amy: That is so interesting. I'd never realized, I guess, how important that was. You know, I was just I grew up, you know, kind of all over the country, right? But for a while, you know, we had a well or whatever, right? And we drink our water and I don't know, it's like water is like the thing, everyone drink all the water. I remember my mom like just getting like this glass quart jar and just guzzling water. So I kind of grew up with that, but I was hiking the Grand Canyon. I did rim to rim. And I was like, okay, water, like you got to have all the water, right?

And the person that was, you know, taking me on this expedition, right? She's a neighbor friend of mine. And she's been going for over 30 years, every year. It's like religious for her. It's amazing, right? And she said, you need to make sure you bring enough salt, like and you need to have like these other things. And I was like, what? Like salt? You want salt? I just I hadn't thought of it, but you know, when you're doing this 25-mile really brutal intense hike, you got to have the salt. So that kind of opened my idea to this idea like you've got to have the minerals. Okay, so that's fascinating.

So, okay, let's talk about when we're trying to help children, if we're not like trying to go straight to medications and we're looking for kind of maybe some alternatives that aren't going to negatively impact their gut, but we're trying to help them like be healthier. One of the things you mentioned was fats, so the healthy fats, right? For like eczema or skin things. Are there other like kind of just really basic, common like medicine alternatives, things that you feel like could help if you're starting to notice your kid getting sick like twice a month or, you know, something or having the never-ending runny nose or things like that. What are some like natural alternatives before going like pure medicine?

Stefanie: Yeah. So I mean, I think one of the most important things we can do for our children is feed them a protective diet. And a protective diet will not only

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support their immune system from things like the common cold, but also that internal immunity, you know, to support gut health against autoimmunity, against some of these other chronic conditions. A protective diet is on one hand, really rich in nutrient dense foods, in which I'll give some examples, but it also is absent of a lot of the foods that are really common for children to eat nowadays. I notice it a lot when I'm in public spaces, like when we're at the pool in the summer or I take my son to like a nature explorers class on Friday afternoons and I'm looking at everyone's snacks and my kid's snack is the only one that doesn't come out of a package.

And before I jump into what some of these things are, because I always get the same like response of like, "Okay, but we're all busy. Like what are the fast? What are the convenient things?" And what I like to just like reframe quickly first for people is that when you look around the world and throughout all of history, every indigenous culture that was ever studied had sacred foods for children that they went to great effort and great length to secure because they knew how important it was.

It was also for people pre-conception, pregnancy, and postpartum, and then for young children because they also know that the way mom is, you know, preparing translates to the health of the child as well. Because they know that the foundation for our health for life comes from being a child. And so it's just like an ironic thing to me now where it's like, no, everyone is looking for the fast, quick tip, right? Instead of like, oh wait, this is like a great responsibility and a great honor to get to build my child's immune system and health for the rest of their life.

So some of the foods that I'm going to say, you're right, they don't come out of a package and you actually need to be reducing those foods and increasing some of these other foods, but it is so worth it. So for anyone who's like feeling a little bit of an edge there, feel free to just like reach out to me on Instagram. We can talk through it in the DMs and I'll just be like, give you the pep talk to be like, "You and your kids health are worth it." But some of these really protective foods are things like egg yolks, meat stock, you know, seafood. I love seafood for kids. It's so, so important that all those trace minerals, again, coming back to the

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minerals, coming back to the salt, the iodine, the things like that. And so even this one does come out of a package, but you know those little seaweed snacks are really great for kids.

But like my son loves oysters, he loves clams. We just exposed them to him from an early age. Liver is one of the best foods you can give your children. Liver is so important. And for a lot of people, we didn't grow up with liver, but if you go back 100 years, everyone like was eating organs. And so I have some really, you know, yummy ways that you can fold it into things for kids who didn't grow up with the taste yet and that, you know, they'll never know that it's in there and even you won't know. And there are ways to slowly start to build it into your food, but it's so, so important. And so really thinking about like what are some of these traditional foods that are very, very nutrient dense, those are going to be the most protective for your children.

Amy: Okay, I'm feeling a little resistant to liver because my mom actually did have me eat some goat liver when I was younger and it was terrible. And it might have been the preparation, or it might just be because I'm not used to it, right? But we do, we get used to the things that we're exposed to. So if there's ways to kind of initiate that into food a little bit. So, okay, here's another thing that I find has been challenging sometimes with my kids because I grew up in my family, we grew a large majority of the food that we ate. My mom did not buy food almost ever. And so I kind of grew up that way. But it wasn't necessarily very popular then and I think it's even a little bit harder now.

Like, it's more popular I think now for kids to take a lunch to school. It's much more common. But when my kids go to school and everybody's got their lunches, right? They have their drink or they brought their chips or they've got, you know, like some fun snacks or whatever. And so I feel like sometimes kids feel like this resistance to if everyone else has all the good stuff and then I'm eating, you know, whatever. Do you have any like thoughts around that? Like how do we help our kids feel not deprived, like that they're getting the good stuff without comparing and contrasting themselves to everybody else and what they're eating? Do you have suggestions around that?

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Stefanie: Yes, I do. And I want to also just name it's a hard thing and it's a hard topic. I've had a lot of success with a lot of clients who what we do is we give their kids a lot more credit than I think we tend to do. Children are smart and they are wise and they want to understand the world, but they also want to feel good in their bodies. And I think we don't really explain things to them frequently enough in a way that's like assuming they have the intelligence to understand.

And so, I mean I've seen this be successful with kids as small as kindergarten. I have a client who was sending her kid to kindergarten and they were having the same issue around like class snacks and things like that. And we really just kind of clear - and I'm not going to say that this is like the best method for everyone, but this really worked for them. We really explained that there are real foods and fake foods and that foods that come from manufactories and things like that and have artificial colors and just explained like what goes into those foods and that it's not really real food. You can eat it, but it doesn't break down in our bodies properly and it can make us sick. And then we have real food and our family eats real food and explaining what that is and what that does to our bodies and like, "You know how sometimes when you eat this and you feel really cranky afterwards because you were running around, whatever."

And like really explain to that to him and it was pretty amazing over the course of a couple months, he would come home and you know, she would always pack him his own snack and things like that. And he would come home from soccer practice or wherever where they were having the snack and he'd be like, "Yeah, mommy, they offered me, you know, food and I said, 'No, thank you. And I had my real food and I didn't want the fake food.'" And it really worked for their family.

And so I think there are ways of like really explaining to kids like this is why we don't eat that and this is why some people think that it's okay to eat, but we don't think that. And it's like you would explain a value around anything, around religion, around other values you have, around screens or whatever it is, right? It's just creating a boundary and holding it. And then it doesn't mean you don't make delicious and yummy things. You mean you want gummies? Okay, great. Let's make amazing really nutrient dense gummies that are so yummy. I mean

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you can make with, you know, organic, whatever juice you like or what you know, blending fresh fruit and combining it with some gelatin, you can make delicious gummies and there's you go. You have your Sour Patch Kids.

Amy: That's amazing. Okay, so I was thinking about this and kind of like two follow up things. So one would be, I grew up drying fruit, right? We had our own orchards, like organic orchards, whatever, growing up. And so I grew up like preserving my own fruit. Canned fruit or we dry fruit. And dry fruit was like my go-to snack as a child. I'm like, "I probably got way too much sugar in my life, but it was natural. Is that okay? I don't know." Anyway, so I have fruit trees in my backyard and my kids and I harvest our fruit every year and we dry it. And then that's like one of their snacks that they have all year.

In fact, my 13-year-old boys, I have two 13-year-old boys, they call them their gamer snacks. So they'll take like these bags of dried apples or dried apricots and they'll go eat them and those are their snacks that they're like trying to sneak to school or that they're doing while they're, you know, doing something online or whatever. And so I just think it's interesting. The neighbor kids will come over, they'll sneak them out, you know, as they're like playing and like it's this whole funny game, they're trying to sneak the dried apricots. It doesn't always have to be that your snacks are less cool because those are actually the coveted ones. They're not going after the goldfish or the fruit snacks or things. They actually get those at their own house.

At our house, they don't have the same like dried fruits and stuff. So it can actually, I think, be cool to be able to do that. The other question I wanted to ask you was this. So if we're trying to be kind of like a moderate like, okay, I really want to try to improve my child's health. I want to put more of these nutrient foods in my child's life, but I also don't want to be like so extreme that, you know, my child isn't allowed. You know, if it's not a severe health issue where I don't need to be so extreme to say, you know, my child can't have any of these things, right? And allow them to kind of have some of those things some of the time. Do you feel like there's still health benefits to that to trying to move towards that even if we're not going all the way firm boundary, you can't have any of the fake foods situation?

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Stefanie: I mean, 100%, these protective foods are going to be beneficial in any amount and giving them in addition to processed foods would be better than not having them in addition to processed foods, right? So absolutely. It's an interesting thing and I'll just say that, you know, I think this idea of extreme is so interesting. You know, like if we were to go back however many years, like which one would actually be the extreme? And I take no offense to it when people say that, you know, they think that my lifestyle is extreme, but I also think that I meet a lot of moms who are very - it's almost like I don't have the word. They're like very health curious.

Like, you know, they want to be more in this world and they have like a intuitive drive and a pull to like, "Oh, I do want to move away from these processed foods and I want to move towards this," but they're so afraid of like what their neighbors or their in-laws or whoever, you know, like other societal people will say. And something that I just like want to offer is there are so many people moving in this direction who are realizing that maybe it's actually extreme to think that it's okay to eat these foods in moderation.

Like we just know that the FDA banned, you know, Red 40, which like for years has been banned in cosmetics. So like, is it extreme for me to say that I'm not letting my son eat that? Or on the other side of it, is it, you know, like again, everyone gets to decide that for themselves, but I'm just wanting to offer that for anyone who's listening who's like, "Oh, I am interested in this, but like why is everyone thinking this is extreme?" There is like a whole world out here where it's not. So just an invitation to anyone who feels more curious about this lifestyle and wants to just like lean into that.

Amy: That's such a good perspective. I'm glad that you brought that to our attention. And I think one of the other questions that I had around this, because I think one of the concerns you brought up, the primary concerns I've heard and some of the ones I've had myself as I've thought through some of these things and my children being out in the world and how this all works together. So one was, you know, what is the response to other people around them, you know, and how do they engage with other people? And we kind of talked about that. One of the other ones is the time thing you brought up. Like it takes more time to

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prepare real food than to just buy fake food and open a package. But my thought around that is that there are ways though to still make that faster or simpler. It's not going to be as fast as opening a package, but do you have suggestions around like batching things? Like ways to kind of simplify and make it easier and more doable?

Stefanie: Absolutely. I mean, I think the mom's best friend is a slow cooker. Like I use my slow cooker so much, y'all. Like, it is a game changer. And so again, just to say, I am in a season right now where my background is actually I used to work as a private chef a little bit. And so like I love to cook. I have the background in cooking. And I'm in a season of my life right now where like food is about simplicity. That doesn't mean I'm compromising on nutrition. It doesn't mean I'm compromising on my values around it. We're just making things simpler and faster.

And so one thing that I've been doing a lot of is in the morning, like around the time we're making breakfast or just like, you know, right before I start my work day, I take literally less than 10 minutes and I put a nice cut of meat of some kind in the for, you know, in the slow cooker with some seasonings and I let it cook for six or eight hours and then that's what we're having for dinner alongside some really easy sides. And so just like thinking about how can I make things simple is I think a huge way to just open up this world. Like sheet pan meals, even like utilizing, you know, it doesn't mean like packaging like yes, in a perfect world we'd be, you know, growing all of our own veggies. Like I want your childhood, Amy, that's amazing.

But you know, that's like a perfect, perfect world. We're not living in that world, but you can have some like frozen cauliflower rice and some frozen veggies in your freezer and some frozen shrimp and make a 15-minute cauliflower rice with shrimp stir fry situation that literally comes together in 15 minutes from the freezer. That's still so nourishing, full of all of those, you know, vegetables that have the phytonutrients, but also has the seafood and maybe you crack a few eggs in it and like super easy to pull together. So definitely, definitely, definitely, I mean, I love working with people on meal planning and just like helping them

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understand like what are some of the principles of like how to throw together a really quick sheet pan meal, right?

Where you put a piece of salmon and some veggies in the oven, comes out, you cover it in butter, and you guys have a really, really nourishing meal. And I think a lot of times, a lot of the foods that people are afraid of are actually the ones that are really nourishing for us and we're starting to see a little bit of change here, but, you know, like butter is a health food. I give my kid like full-on, he just eats butter as a snack. Like that's okay. It's really better than, you want something out of a package? Get some butter, you know, that you're going to give your kid as a snack. Things like that, like butter and a date. Wow, those both technically come out of packages, but they're real food. And so I think there are so many ways to really get smart about how you're cooking.

Amy: Mmm, I love that so much. And I think it makes such a difference. I think too, one of the other concerns that comes up sometimes is cost. And I think, "Okay, but when I compare, maybe I'm more on top of my meal planning and being more intentional about what I'm purchasing and I'm looking for real foods, you know, the meats and fruits and vegetables and real foods versus, you know, going to Costco and trying to get something fast." And then I end up spending a lot more on Costco and prepared foods. And Costco has great like nutritional things too in there. I love their produce section actually.

Anyway, I just feel like financially it you're spending less when you're I think you're being more intentional about what you're cooking. Like you're talking about, starting in the morning by putting some meat in the slow cooker and you know, just doing some veggies and things like that. So I think a lot of these concerns that kind of hold us back are maybe not as big a deal as we think they are. And we can start shifting that direction and start moving towards that and giving ourselves and our kids a healthier lifestyle.

Stefanie: Absolutely. And I mean, I'm all for like ground beef is just as nourishing as a brisket. Like you don't have to buy the most expensive cut, you know? And so I think there can be a lot of ways around being intentional around the cost of this. And even just like going out to eat one time in a week will blow the whole difference between your food budget of buying organic and not. I mean, it's

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really amazing. I think about this a lot with new moms, you know, like a lot of people just rely so much on takeout. And I've done the math.

Like what it would cost you to hire a private chef to come to your home and meal prep a week's worth of food for you is the difference of like one and a half takeout orders. And so we just need to shift our mindset around it is really what it is. And like sometimes that takes work. I mean, I will say yesterday was one of those days where I was just like, it would be really nice to go and eat out right now. But instead I put my head down and in 30 minutes, I put together a really awesome chili that is going to feed us for four days. Like, you know, we're not just going to eat chili straight for four days, but you know, I threw it together really quickly and as we were eating this really yummy, delicious chili and I looked at it going in the fridge and I thought, "Oh, about all the extra meals that's going to create." It was such a satisfying feeling. And I mean, we spent a fraction on that than we would have for going out for dinner.

Amy: Yes. It's so amazing. And I love leftovers because that does kind of provide us with options. And yeah, you can stagger it. You don't have to eat it like all the days in a row. But also, sometimes my kids would rather take that for lunch, like, you know, they don't want to just take a sandwich for lunch. They would rather I think often have the chili or have the, you know, salad with some meat or something like that. They'd rather take that for lunch than a sandwich or, you know, with chips and whatever. Like they actually prefer the real food for lunch. And I'm like, "Okay, let's do that."

Okay, really quick. We are running out of time. I'm loving this conversation. Can we talk a little bit about, you talked about toxins. I feel like this is like a stress point for parents because it feels like toxins are in everything and it feels overwhelming. And so just from a place of, "Help me." And maybe other people that feel like this idea of avoiding toxins feels a little overwhelming. Do you have like just a couple of top tips for trying to maybe decrease the toxins that our kids are exposed to?

Stefanie: Absolutely. So depending on how old your kids are, this can be a fun activity that you do with them or it could be something that you do when they go to bed. But one of the things that I always have my clients do is a product audit.

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And so starting with that is a really easy way to do it. And so what you'll do is you can download the Environmental Working Group has an app called Healthy Living. So the EWG Healthy Living app. And for most household, you know, name brand products, you can scan them with the app. So it'll have like a little scanner and you scan the barcode and it'll pull up a rating.

And so for body products, things like lotions, shampoos, toothpaste, whatever, it's going to be a 1 to 10 rating. And then for cleaning products like laundry detergent, whatever, it'll be like an ABCDE, you know, EF rating kind of thing. And so you can start to just get a picture of like, "Okay, well how toxic are some of these products in my house?" And then what I recommend people do, and again, this can be kind of fun to do with kids, you know, like if they're older, just be like, "Okay, everyone go and grab all of the things that you use and bring them to the living room and we're going to scan them and like figure out what these numbers are, right?" And then from there, you can kind of make a spreadsheet or a list and just be like, "What are the highest offenders? What are the things that are okay?" And I have a spreadsheet that I recommend for people with this and then it's like, okay, am I replacing this when it runs out? Am I replacing this right away?

And I would say that the things that are like touching your body the most, so for example, laundry detergent, you are wearing it all day, every day. You are sleeping on it for hours at night. It's everywhere. And so that can be like one of the first things that I typically recommend people replace, right? Things like dishwasher soap, things like that. Again, every morsel you eat goes through is being touched by that. So if that's a really high offender, maybe that's one we prioritize switching out. If your mascara comes back terribly, I'm not so concerned if you wait until it runs out, right? It's like you're just getting a very little amount of it. So kind of prioritizing, well, where does it make sense to switch?

One thing I'll just say also about this with the cost, some of the best cleaning products are almost free. Baking soda costs a dollar for this, you know, box. It's one of the best cleaning products. You can put it in your laundry machine. I mean, everything. Vinegar, again, you can buy this thing of vinegar, add one

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drop of essential oil to it, and like you have amazing cleaning products. Like we don't have to go and spend a fortune to replace these products. It can be as simple as like looking up how do I DIY making, you know, a little vinegar spray bottle, very cheap, very easy. And even if you choose to go with one of the brands that the EWG recommends or something more natural, it kind of just becomes on autopilot. So it feels overwhelming at first, but it's one of those things where then you slowly start to just make the shift and then you never go back.

Amy: Oh my gosh. I am like going to go download that app and that sounds so fun. Like my kids would love doing that with us. They'd be so excited and then horrified and excited and the whole thing sounds amazing and so fun.

Stefanie: And again, if they're of that age, like then it can be a fun project to be like, "Okay, well, let's choose, okay, this lotion is terrible. Like we're throwing it away. Let's make one ourselves." I mean, we make our own tallow balm. It is so easy. You literally buy tallow and you melt it. And then, you know, this is a fun thing to do with kids. You could add a couple of essential oils to it, a little bit of olive oil. You let it cool and then you whip it like you're making a cake. You know, and it becomes this like really frothy whipped tallow balm that feels so silky and amazing.

Kids have so much pride in something that they helped make. And you just like you put it in a mason jar and that's your lotion. I mean it is so empowering to recognize that we are actually not dependent on these mega organizations, these mega corporations, and whatever chemicals they're putting, like if you don't know how to say or buy the ingredients that are on the back of whatever your thing is, it's probably not that good for you. And so like, there's a homemade and easy and cheap version of all of these things. And of course, you can spend more money and buy the nice version, you know, like the quote unquote clean version if you want, but just a reminder, it doesn't have to be expensive.

Amy: Oh, I love this so much. And I've found that I actually sometimes like my homemade concoction cleaning supplies or whatever better than some of the other ones anyway. Like they just some of them work so well. I did my own like

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weed killer last year instead of, you know, using roundup and, you know, that stuff that all came out and the stuff I use for my shower and getting like the water stains off my shower and all these things like and it's like, yeah, it's like you're using vinegar, you're using these different natural things. And oh my gosh, it's delightful. It's way cheaper. And it's like it works really well and it makes you feel so good inside to know you're like doing something for yourself and your family and improving your health. So this has been amazing. We are out of time. Can you tell people where they can find you so that we can come and get more ideas and tips? And if people want to message you on Instagram and chat more and get that like motivational speech, all the things. How do we find you?

Stefanie: Yeah. So come say hi. My Instagram handle is Stefanie, S T E F with an F, A N I E, Adler, A D L E R, Wellness, and like really it means the world to me when people reach out and are like, "Hey, I was listening to you on, you know, this podcast and I loved this conversation you were having with Amy. This was the thing I took away or like, oh my god, this is the thing that I am struggling the most with." Just come say hi. I read all my own messages and it means the world to me to just hear from other moms and for us to be all in this together. So please just come reach out. And I'm happy to give you a pep talk anytime you need it. And just the thing to remember is a nourished mother creates a nourished family. And you get to have this trickle down wellness. You really do. And so whatever that means to you, just take a little bit of time for yourself, take a little time for your own wellness today, and just trust that it's going to go back to your kids.

Amy: Mmm, I love that. We'll end with that. That was amazing. And we'll put the link in the show notes so that people can find both the link to that app that you were suggesting and then where to find you on Instagram so we can come be besties and improve our health together. So good. Thank you so much for coming, Stefanie. I so appreciate it.

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Don't you just love all the fun things we're learning on this show together? Well, we wanted to give you a chance to practice a little bit of it at home. And so we

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made you a special freebie just for being a listener here. You can grab it at PlanningPlaytime.com/special-freebie.

So what this freebie is, I'll tell you, is an amazing alphabet activity that you can start using with your kiddos. And it is based in play and is so fun. You can use dot markers with it. You can use Q-tip painting. You could use circled cereal. There's all kinds of options. You can print it out today and get started. Just head over to PlanningPlaytime.com/special-freebie, and we'll send that to you right away.

Thank you for hanging out with me today for this fun chat on *Raising Healthy Kid Brains*. If you want to see more of what we're doing to support kiddos and their amazing brains, come visit us on our website PlanningPlaytime.com. See you next week.