5 Reasons Your Child’s Eczema Won’t Improve Even With a Clean Diet Transcript

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Welcome and episode setup

Hey team, welcome back to the XMA Kids podcast. I'm your host, Andrea McHugh, and if you're listening right now, I'm betting that you are doing everything right.

You're already supporting your child and your family with clean food and a clean home and stacks of supplements and detailed protocols and colored-coated spreadsheets and somehow their skin is still inflamed.

And if that's you, this episode is for you because today we're talking about why that happens and what actually moves the needle when eczema won't calm down even when you're doing every single thing right.

Today I'm joined by Dr. Daniel Keeley. He's a functional medicine practitioner and in this conversation we unpack the hidden blind spots. I see all over and over again in families dealing with chronic eczema, nervous system load, sleep architecture, digestion and motility, stress, foundation before intervention.

This is not about doing more. It's about doing the right things in the right order so that the body can finally respond positively. So before we dive in, if you're listening and you're actively trying to calm flares or stop eczema from spreading, the Skin Comfort Trio is designed to support the skin barrier while we address the root causes underneath.

It's the same simple topical routine that I used with my own kids and still do to this day and with families inside the eczema elimination method. You can find it at eczemakids.com inside the eczema shop.

Alright, let's get into today's conversation with Dr. Keeley. Is your child struggling with itchy nights and endless flare-ups? I'm Andrea McHugh, mom of four and host of eczema kids.

Here you'll find natural solutions that actually work so you can heal your child's eczema without steroids, without the overwhelm, and finally see calm, healthy skin again.

Let's get into it. Hey team, welcome back. If you are listening as a parent of a child with eczema, there's a good chance that you already have done what you are told to do.

You've cleaned up the diet and you've switched the products and you read all the labels and you've removed all the obvious triggers and still the skin is so reactive and the layers keep coming and you're left wondering what you're missing.

And that's why I'm really excited to have today's conversation. Today I'm joined by Dr. Daniel Keeley. He's the host of the TBD Fit podcast. where he helps people step out of guessing and symptom-chasing and into a more personalized, data-informed understanding of how the body actually heals.

His work plans advanced medicine with lifestyle fundamentals, sleep, play, movement, nourishment, and purpose because skin and immune issues don't exist in isolation.

The families that I work with here, they're doing everything right on the surface and they're so attentive and caring and researched and they give their child the right things, but they're still feeling stuck.

And that's why I want to start there. Dr. Daniel, welcome to the show. Thank you so much for having me. Pleasure to be on.

Foundational blind spots behind eczema

So for those families, and that's everyone that I work with, they're doing everything right and clean diet and the clean products, but the itchy, bleedy skin, it still persists.

What do you usually see as the biggest blind spots as a functional medicine practitioner? So I often see that the healthiest among us are the sickest among us.

People that are these walking pharmacies trying to fill in every single detail and every gap. But usually there's foundational mistakes. And I've never seen that not to be accurate.

And by the foundation, we developed this principle of our foundational five. You have to eat right, sleep right, move right, talk right, poop right. And often enough, one of those are not up to par, and when two are not up to par, then we see manifestations of pain, of barrier dysfunction, whether it's the level of the gut, of the lungs.

asthma or allergies, whether it's in the brain and now you're talking about autoimmunity or Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, or whether it is at the level of the skin, which is probably your patient population.

And we see this becoming more aggressive, more ubiquitous. And I don't like guessing, I like testing and treating. So once we have a discussion with our patients in terms of are they eating right, sleeping right, moving right, talking right, pooping right?

Where is that bottleneck? Where's the hole? So one test that we like doing is a nutrigenomic test. So I can see very quickly what's happening at the level of your genes and where we need to pluck holes in your specific biology from a nutraceutical intervention.

So our goal is practicing natural remedies, natural medicine, holistic healthcare. to what I call precision-based medicine in terms of really overcoming any sort of bottleneck or predisposition within your genetic profile.

So that's one. Another test that I love doing is a total toxin test, which we now have at our access when we're looking at over 35 different environmental toxins, where we're looking at 20 different heavy metals.

We're looking at your nutrient profile. We're looking at mycotoxin or mold exposure. A lot of this is driving or at the root of what is we see within our inflammatory skin conditions.

And what happens is When you have this toxin spillover, eventually you see that at the level of the skin, right? So it's immune dysregulation, which is coupled with a high degree of inflammation that gets out of control.

And now you have barrier dysfunction, the level of skin, which is reflected with our isomal patients, as for example, are this prevalence of atopic marge.

Yeah, yeah. So can you go a little bit more into those five foundational things that you spoke to? So for, you know, keeping eczema in mind or toggle of mind, how could you best be right to support that condition?

I love that you started with Eat Right. That's what you did on our podcast, which when you were on, you so elegantly went into ways to think about nutrition.

I typically start with Eat Right myself as well, because that's instruction, right? The crux of it, it's Sleep Right, which I'm sure we'll get into. But Eating Right is instruction.

And I always say that food is no longer benign. It's going to heal you. It's going to hurt you. If nature made it, it's OK. If man made it, it's OK. Avoid things in a back box or plastic.

And that's the hardest part, I think, for kids. and parents as well, because our goal is to empower and educate and redefine the paradigm of what actually nutrition means.

Because if you look at our ancestors in the 1900s, one in two were farmers. And now we have aggregated that

more to big industrial farming, monocrop culture, heavily sprayed with herbicide, fungicide, pesticide, insecticide.

And so our food is no longer clean, if you will, and certainly our soils deplete of minerals. And so our goal is, well, can we plant a garden? Can we teach our parents and kids to cook and to understand that there should not be an ingredient label?

The ingredient label is the food, right? So shopping the outer aisles of the grocery store. Eating seasonally, that is one good thing that's often overlooked.

So I have a stepping stone process. And the first is eating what your ancestors ate, because that's typically what you're going to do best with. Why? Because that's reflected in your microbial personalized signature.

So while you and I are 99.98% identical, our microbiome is very different. And we see that with studies with twins where while they're genetically identical, up to only 40% in their microbiome is actually similar.

How unique. So we are about 57% bacteria, 43% human. Our bacteria outnumber us almost 10 to 1. And so we need to really nurture our microbes with a form of fiber, with fermented foods, with polyphenols, with foods that are more native to our biology and none of that came in a bag box or plastic.

So first it's eat what your ancestors ate because that's likely when it can set for success because that's what your microbes have been learned to feed on over time.

Then eat seasonally. Avocado and berries don't grow all year round. Eat locally. That's where it's going to be more replete of the nutrient because it's not sitting in the back of a truck, you know, shipped from California or wherever you are in the world if we're importing our fruits.

not to say there's not a benefit to that but the goal is once the nutrient is or the food is pulled out of the soil and it's effectively dead right so it's losing its life source so the goal is to pick it and eat it so growing your own little garden better still but eat local eat what your ancestors ate eat seasonally eat locally and then lastly is the goal is to make it a fun process So encouraging parents to cook together with their children, helping them educate what actually healthy nutrition should look like.

And then also understanding that food timing matters.

Nutrition, timing, and food as instruction

So we're living in conjunction with our circadian biology. That's often overlooked and that's one area of medicine I think that will continue to prevail.

Sachin Panda's book did that so elegantly when they found that Mice that were fed late at night a healthy nutrition versus unhealthier for early in the afternoon all put on weight 100% of the mice which is very typical in the scientific community and definitely referring my paradigm in terms of nutrition and how I practice and my suggestions.

The mice that were fed healthy but late at night all had gained weight. So timing perhaps matters above quality and quantity, interestingly. So the timing is also imperative in terms of when we're eating.

And then what you brought about in our podcast, food combination, right? Understanding what pairs with what, not trying to maybe do everything at one time, right?

So modifying the timing of fruit. versus protein or starchy carbohydrates with protein. So all those details matter and it doesn't have to become complicated, right?

The goal is not to be burdened with all this. The goal is to listen to your body and if body speaks volumes, we've kind of disassociated our internal intuition and we have 10 times more efferent nerves that go from the gut to the brain.

So this gut feeling is actually very, very real. So listen to what fruits we crave because that's instruction. Usually, if you're craving something like dark chocolate and I want to really underscore dark chocolate, I just came back from visiting Costa Rica and we did a chocolate tour.

I have three little girls, eight, five and three. And the reason why I went there is to this notion of Pura Vida and live in this Ecovilla, which is a self-sustainable village and community where they grow their own produce.

It's this notion of unschooling and homeschooling, or even local schooling, but it's a communal living where everyone thrives together, and sourcing nutrients from Mother Earth.

We went on this chocolate tour. I'm going to have the guy on our podcast because he was so profound. What's so interesting is that I have one example.

One takeaway is mosquitoes pollinate the coca plant. How interesting. So in order to have chocolate, we need mosquitoes, but yet our goal is to eradicate and kill, right?

But 100% dark chocolate is very different than our modern white chocolate, which is absolutely not chocolate. And certainly, you know, sugar enriched chocolate.

And so helping them understand kind of what natural nutrients look like, but also in terms of chocolate, usually that's a deficiency of magnesium. Chocolate is a super when it's actually the retain of its actual roots.

So usually nutrition is instruction and if you're creating sugar, obviously there's dysbiosis over yeast or fungal overgrowth. So understanding to there anything that the body is, whether it's pain, whether that's eczema in the skin, whether that's allergies or asthma.

All that is reflective of something going on and the goal within what we do in our clinic is we're very simple. I don't like guessing, I like testing and treating.

At the rudimentary level, it's important for us to recognize that the signals speak volumes and then there's a way to overcome it. So looking at nutrition and all that kind of how we try to empower our young ends and maybe one last thing too is a proud father.

So maybe you might appreciate this. What is the worst holiday in my opinion? Halloween. Number one, I don't like getting scared. Number two, it's just candy, right?

Which causes cavities, which disrupts the oral microbiome, which then poorly sees the gut microbiome. And now later you have dysbiosis, translocation of bad bacteria that's reflected in the skin with eczema or anything else.

So I just try to educate my little ones and I just help them read the labels. Does this sound like it came from mother earth? Number two is if we have a label, we already have a problem.

Okay, but needless to say is, so we hand out apples. Yes, we are that family with plenty of fruit and organic produce. But needless to say is, I help educate them.

And I'll always kiss to make that decision. And so two things happen. Number one, as I say, if you ever have a cavity, you're paying for the dentist. So now you gotta learn how to work.

That's a discipline, a skill in itself. But number two, is when I aim to educate instead of impose, they came back home after trick or treating and dumped their bag of candy into the garbage can.

I was blown away. My kids are eight, five and three. Okay. And this was a couple of years ago when this happened when they were a little bit younger. So.

Needless to say is they recognize early on, OK, this is not good for you. This is going to hurt your tummy. This is

going to lead to cavities. This is going to make you slower, weaker, especially if you're an athlete, because I'm a former professional athlete.

So the goal is to help educate, especially that population, what it means to perform at the highest level. And I was blown away because I never instructed them to do that.

They went on their own like, look, Papa. And literally all the candy was at the bottom of the garbage can. Parents, are you exhausted from battling your child's eczema?

You've tried the prescriptions, the creams, the elimination diets, and the flares keep coming back. I'm Andrea McHugh, mama for and host of the eczema kids podcast.

Two of my children suffered with severe eczema and I know the sleepless nights and the nonstop itching and the frustration of feeling like nothing works.

That's why I created this podcast to share what actually does from natural solutions that calm the skin to practical everyday tips that make healing actually possible.

You'll find hope, clarity, and a path forward here. Follow eXimaKids wherever you get your podcasts and head to eXimaKids.com for free recipes and resources to start your child's healing journey today.

Oh man, that would make me so proud. My mind threw theirs away as well the next day, you know, because that's the expectation. It's just gonna happen.

And on Halloween day, go nuts. But it's because, right? Like the world is just not set up the way that, you know, everything that you outlined. Like I heard up to 60% of what kids eat all day is processed, right?

And There's very limited outdoor time. There's complete negligence to like most everything that you just said in every holidays marked with, you know, a bag of processed sugar in the disguise of even chocolate and it's not even chocolate.

And so, you know, what do you do as Dr. Dad? Like, what are some winning I guess educating, first and foremost, is a really good one. But what are some other things that you employ with your kiddos that seems to be effective, even though there's just this stark contrast of how we're supposed to live and how to actually thrive versus how it's set up?

These kids are in such a fragile, sensitive state. They have to be so mindful. of these rules, but then, you know, a lot of parents are worried about them being extra ostracized and all the things because they're maybe not eating the uncrustables and because they just have to take these extra precautions.

So what are just some other like effective like doctor parenting things that we could start to employ in our own homes? You know what's interesting? So it really starts with education.

And I have parents all the time. And this is for the last decade now, parents come to me and say, Daniel, I don't know what you're doing. But my child listens to you and they don't listen to me.

That's good. Or I don't know what you're doing, but they're responding better with you than with our therapist. Can they continue to come see you? And it's interesting because kids have a deep place in my heart.

I actually partnered with a nonprofit called Children International that build community centers, both domestic and internationally, to help support kids with education and health care and sports.

And again, just mentorship, you know, providing these kids a second chance. And as a professional athlete myself, we see a lot of young athletes. That's a subset of the population we do very well.

We've given our pedigree. And so I kind of frame it in terms of what's important for them, right? Where do you want to excel in your life? And obviously that matters if they're one versus if they're, you know, five, 10, 14, 16, 18. So the conversation changes depending on the context naturally.

But at a rudimentary level, it's just serving as an educator and then helping them connect the dots, right? I just say, okay, when you're eating sugar, excess sugar, You are going to be slow.

You are going to impede your strength progress. You are not going to perform at the optimal level. And if you want to play professionally, we know what that takes.

I have that roadmap for you. So that's one caveat. Another one is participating in education in general with what natural medicine and natural nutrients actually looks like.

that starts with healthy hydration. Are you drinking pop? Are you drinking water? Is our body made up of pop and soda or is it made up of water? And let's distinguish what actually clean water looks like from not clean water and how you feel when you have certain water when you don't have other water.

And so at the basic level, it's just providing education and empowerment rather than any sort of imposition is my way or the highway, here are the rules of the house.

In fact, I sit down with my kids every quarter and every year and it's almost like a business in terms of, okay, what are our goals? What are we looking to achieve and giving them a voice, right?

Often parents are dictators and my goal is the opposite. I want to listen to my kids because I can learn from them. right and to me our adults are just big kids you know in suits and dresses right and it's interesting because it's estimated that kids laugh 140 times a day and adults 14 times a day so we lose that as we age so beyond any sort of doctor had i think the component is how could i rationalize with my children?

How can I speak to them on a higher level in an effort to educate and empower and to provide a roadmap and to help them understand, you know, this is a learning process.

We're going to go through this together, whether we're doing new recipes or trying to look up recipes when we're cooking. Or if we're trying to have new experiences where we go to a museum or like I said, we just went to La Ecovia in Costa Rica to a retreat.

It was actually not that expensive, interestingly. So there's a way to do this with high degree of affordability, but to showcase a different environment of what natural can actually look like.

Because as you just elegantly underscored is we are no longer living in conjunction with our evolutionary biology. we're constantly stuck indoors under these LED lights, not native again to our biology, damaging our retinal cells.

We go from one box to the next, we're not grounding, we're not earthing, we're not getting in clean air, clean water, clean nutrients, and yet we're only getting more sick.

And so often there are things foundationally that are overlooked that we don't understand, right? So going back to the principle of eat right, speak right, move right, talk right, poop right, I dive deep into the details of what that actually can be like.

And to me, there's no detail that gets overloaded. But my goal is not perfection. I always say progress over perfection. So 1% better every single day and making it fun, making it engaging and a challenge every night instead of reading a bedtime story, which we do on occasion.

I encourage my kids to make up their own story. So I give them three things, like a person, a place, or a thing, and they have to make up their own story.

They give me, you know, three different things, and now I make up my own story. And it forces me to be creative or imaginative.

Parenting, modeling, and reducing stress

it forces that which is a different muscle in the brain right so it's thinking about or implementing these different tools and tactics so those are a couple definitely it starts with empowerment but it also is important to serve as a model and i didn't realize how quickly kids are kind of like monkeys or parrots and will model the behavior that we implement.

So if I'm doing push-ups and sit-ups at home, the next day I walk into my daughter's room and she's doing push-ups and sit-ups by herself. And I go, holy guacamole, right?

That's remarkable. So if we have bad behavior, right, if I'm fighting with my spouse or there's any tension, obviously they sense that. And so modeling what healthy behavior looks like, trying to stay off of our devices, certainly the blue screens that we're constantly exposed to, understanding the pros and cons of social media and what that can do to the young childhood brain.

And then normalizing what should be normal. So we don't have much land in our backyard, but we do sit back to a forest preserve. So we're constantly walking outside in nature, often enough barefoot just to ground and discharge to the bottom of our feet and to get in tune with our evolutionary biology.

But what we do have is a lot of urns on our porch. So we have chives growing or garlic shoots and onions and basil and oregano. And what our kids do, I found.

when they're going outside to play in a black yard because we have a little tree swing set, they'll start chomping on the chives. They'll start chomping on the garlic shoots or on the onions.

And I'm like, oh my God, that's incredible because this is not something that I ever did as a kid. And offline when we were speaking, it's like bitter equals better, but yet kids are constantly creating these hyper palatable crap foods, CRAP, completely refined and processed foods.

that often are devoid of nutrients, so we're overfed yet malnourished. And so the problem becomes… what we model as a parent. And so a lot of it becomes educating the parent first.

And when we normalize some of these key things for kids, it's like if I'm eating a red bell pepper to get the adequate amount of vitamin C daily, because we don't synthesize that unlike some mammals.

And so they see that as normal. They just come up and take off my plate, right? If I'm eating a snack and redefining what snacking looks like, right? So when they're going outside and just taking some of these herbs or vegetables or even fruits that we're growing or trying to grow, right?

That becomes normal behavior. And that's the problem is often enough with our parents, once we model the behavior of snacking from back box and plastic, that's what's normalized.

And then kids, those are the microbes you feed. So fruit is instruction. And the food that we eat, whether it's kale or sugar or broccoli or potato, those feed very different microbes.

And we ultimately are a slave to our microbes. We feed them and they feed us. We went very deep cut on my podcast with short chain fatty acid production and without going too deep into the science.

The point is if we have an unhealthy population, we're going to make unhealthy choices. I'm reflecting our microbiome. So that has been my focus for the last decade, the interplay of our microbiome in every biological system.

So my goal is to lead with healthy instruction to nourish and redefine again, the paradigm of what nourishing means. Cause I don't like the word diet and as a diet, I love the term nourishment.

So that's how I think about it. love it yes it's just like ways that i mean right you ultimately have to get your kids on board right if you're in a place like everyone that's listening is in a place where they need to make some change yeah no matter what like that's been going on before and what's really great about kids is that they're motivated this condition will motivate them like if they're under two they just have to go along with whatever you're doing so You know, that's fine.

You can just implement the changes and you don't have to make a big fuss about it. And they will just eat what you get them. And if they're over two, they are motivated.

They don't want to feel this way. Like when my two year old was really, really suffering, he's like, well, this will help your spots. Like we're going to do this instead of this because it's going to help your spots.

She's like, okay, I'm game. Yeah, I feel horrible. And so. I think just in talking out loud about what you're doing as you're doing it, and then preemptively putting those things out that are available for you.

For you guys as the chives, that's amazing. Definitely going to start an earth garden this year, it's on my list. But then, yesterday I put out a plate of just carrots and bell peppers and those types of things, just knowing that they're going to run to the pantry and we don't have an insane amount of snacks, but they're still there because it feels nearly impossible to raise kids without them and it's just like they make a stop there first either by their own their own free will or might be saying like you don't get this until this habits you know until you eat five carrots and like one way or another you know if you can just be diligent about getting the fiber and getting the polyphenols and all the things that you just talked about in there's stuff you can do no matter what their age is so that's way cool.

What can you do for everything for your sleep to go right? Because these kids, they're tired, right? They're so tired that they can't even sleep and their parents are the same.

And so willpower is low, but it's just also, you know, they're struggling, right? They're out there every three hours and they're so itchy and so miserable.

How do we help them sleep? So part of it is poor nutrition. So looking at what they're eating that could be hurting their tummy or inflaming them. And there's so much power in just looking at their stool.

I always yell at my kids, not yell at my kids, but I yell for them when they're going to the bathroom. I go, don't flush the toilet because I want to see what's going on because that's instruction as well.

You know, what's happening at the level of the gut because what we don't realize while the pineal produces about five percent of our melatonin, Most of it is at the level of the gut and at the mitochondria.

So 400 times more in the gut production. So if you're looking at melatonin, not only as a sleep hormone, but primarily as a circadian biology hormone, every single cell gland organism in life, in nature, produces melatonin.

My goal is to optimize circadian biology and how we do that is, again, eat right, sleep right, move right, talk right, poo right, all those play into it.

So we address the nutrition component because that has a large driver in terms of our mitochondrial production, healthy microbiome production, with some of these post-biotics, especially some of our neurotransmitters, which keep us up awake.

So here's an interesting component. I'll give you an end of one anecdotal story. I have three girls. My first one, pregnancy was perfect. Partner was training right, she was sleeping right, she was eating right, she was taking her supplements, like everything, our relationship was great, okay.

I didn't know what the terrible twos meant. There were no terrible twos ever. She's a happy-go-lucky. Just perfect little child. Second one, relationship not right.

I'm building the practice. Sleep is not right. There's no supplementation, very little exercise. And then there's loss in the family. This baby is washed in cortisol.

And now I know what the terrible twos are, the terrible threes are, and the terrible fours are. How interesting. Third child is somewhere in between. And her character is actually somewhere in between.

I did a stool test in all three of them. This is why this becomes interesting very quickly. The first child had the greatest richness and diversity in her species.

When everything went right, the external and internal environment. The second one had the poorest richness and diversity in her species. Let's uncover that one step further.

She produces little to almost no GABA. GABA, you're calling neurotransmitter. You need two specific strains of bacteria Lactobacillus plantarum and Bifidobacteria longum.

She was missing those microbes. So when we gave her GAVA, she's like a different child. And then as we begin to replete those species, she's a much different child.

And now she goes to bed early. with pleasure before it was a fight, not because she didn't want to put a bet, but because she was ruminating. She was constantly self-deprecating, self-sabotaging.

She was missing the calming neurotransmitter. So why you can give someone's L-thenin or GABA, which we did with her, and right away it was overnight. We saw a completely different child.

The goal was to treat it with the rodents to restore those missing microbes. Right? And so that's why when you're looking at sleep, this is one of the most overlooked component, whether it's in children or whether it's our aging population.

When I started my practice, I saw two very common things. People were coming with gut issues or sleep issues and often bowel and one will drive the other.

We see that with, if you have one poor night of sleep, you become more TH2 dominant, you're stuck in this inflammatory state. And now you're setting up a stage of core microbial ecosystem or expression.

So they go hand in hand certainly, but when I did something as simple as a stool test to look at the three girls and what's going on at the level of the gut, which is how that implicating neurotransmitter function or sleep function, which is the crux of repairing and healing.

That's when the body is very metabolically active to detox, mitigate waste and clear out through the lymphatic system, the glymphatic system, you know, the metabolic waste products that built up throughout the day.

We see that in order for sleep architecture to be optimal, it starts with something and looking at our mighty micros. And that's the Michael with education with my children.

That's why I yell at them. Don't flush the toilet. Dad wants to see. And then we normalize looking at stool. It's not something that's gross. It's something that's instruction.

Right. So that's one huge component of sleep. Another is just a wind down routine and helping them understand. So my daughter who's a very avid athlete, but now she's in ballroom dance and I literally had her last night.

Her dance was from 8.30 to 9.30 at night. She's eight. This is not healthy because by the time we get home, by the time she brushes her teeth and winds down in showers, you know, it's closer to 10, 1030. That's a problem, right?

In my humble opinion and what I've seen, I diverge with a little bit of general practice or guidelines in terms of You gotta, you know, eat at the same time every day.

You have to go to sleep at the same time every day. I am more subscribed to living in conjunction with the cycles of the light. The sunset is earlier.

Nothing good happens after sunset, especially for kids. So wind down routine should happen earlier. We probably need to sleep more. when we're a little bit more immune culpable in the winter months, which we now have.

I don't know in Denver how good or bad it is, but Chicago, we've been a blizzard. Vitamin D is suppressed. So needless to say is the goal is to start that routine much earlier.

And my partner is a sleep Nazi, which I come to appreciate, okay? Because it's the crux to repair. It's the crux to repleting our healthy war wounds and growth more especially for these kids.

Tumors can grow at night in conjunction with melatonin synthesis. So, while sleep is foundational, the component is we dim the lights earlier into the evening before sunset.

We're trying to avoid food and not eating, you know, three hours before bedtime. So, dinner becomes a little bit earlier. But the problem is we prioritize everything else.

And so, I ask parents, what time do you set your alarm? You know, they say 4.30, 5.30, 6.30 a.m. And I go, no, no, no. What time do you set your alarm to go to bed?

And again, now it's reframing the pair. That sleep is a priority, not an afterthought. Same thing with nutrition. Nutrition is a priority, not an afterthought in our fast food convenience culture that's only getting some more sick that we're doing in between our other priorities of work or driving the kids to their activities.

And we're rushing to get everything in. And I learned the hard way, too. We're complicit, too. You know, we're not perfect. That's why I always strive for progress or imperfection.

At some point, I was an Uber driver in the evening because I was a chaperone for my kids. And between my partner and I, there was no relationship between us.

You know, we were picking up one to drop off the other, to pick up the other, and then they're going to bend so late. That's a problem. I don't believe in balance, I believe in priorities and in setting up a structure that works for you is going to be very different.

But even with these after-school activities, I see it's not designed in conjunction with our evolution. So we sometimes have to press on the brakes instead of constantly on the gas, as we do in the U. S.

And then with our adults, when we're running on empty, we caffeinate, so we press even harder. Right? So with our kids showcasing to them what it looks like to be actually taking care of yourself instead of selfless.

This was a powerful quote that really moved me is when we're selfless, we lose our sense of self. And so the component of putting our oxygen mask first, which we're going to then show up better for our kids.

Right? If we're healthier, our kids are going to be healthier for it because our decisions are going to be made more mindfully and with intention that's going to showcase and model the behavior that we want to see in our kin.

You're doing everything right. You've cleaned up the diet, you've swapped out the soaps, you've put air filters in every room, maybe even live on an organic farm.

And still your child is scratching, bleeding, awake all night. The flares won't stop and no one can tell you why. No parent should have to watch their child suffer, especially when you're already doing everything in your power to fix

it.

That's why I created the eczema kids podcast. I'm Andrea McHugh, mama for health coach and the founder of eczema kits. Two of my own children battled with relentless eczema and I know firsthand how heartbreaking and exhausting it is.

Here we go beyond surface level fixes. You'll learn how to uncover hidden triggers, prepare your child's gut and calm their skin from the inside out.

Sleep, gut health, and nervous system support

You'll hear the real stories of families who found freedom and insights from practitioners who are rewriting what's possible. Because eczema isn't just a skin condition, it's a message from the body.

And when you listen, you can heal. So follow eczema kits wherever you get your podcasts and start your child's healing journey today. Power in the paws, right?

Beautiful. So that segues into, I mean, how do you talk right? Like, what does that mean? So number one, there are certain swear words in our family and can't is vernacular.

I don't like the use of negative words. So sometimes people see problems. I just see solution. Question is just how do you get there, right? And this negative talk is very, very self-sabotaging, very, very self-incriminating.

My goal is to approach with love. Love heals. Love is very supportive. Love is very therapeutic. Love is a choice. Love is an action. And so it starts with how we address each other, how we start to think about ourselves, how we see ourselves with our peers, with our partners within our environment.

And going back to my anecdote within the stool testing in my second child, a lot of her thoughts was self-deprecating, self-sabotage. I'm not good enough.

And it also matters how we talk to our spouses because they see that, right? And then they begin to talk to their siblings the same way. So everything is effectively how much weight you keep it.

And so if it doesn't bear a lot of weight, it's not going to be a problem. And yes, there's always going to be problems, but how do we find a solution?

And so my oldest, she is identical, a hybrid of myself. She doesn't see problems. She sees the solution. I had a very interesting patient that came to me.

and a stroke patient. And she came in with a 178 out of 10 level pain. And with peptide therapy, I said, immediately, we got to take you to the hospital.

No, she said, Dale, this is my life. She's paralyzed on one side. I said, okay, we can restore a lot here. I use peptides very effectively. We can bring about change, improve your quality of life.

Within two sessions, her 178 was less than 10. And some of what I do is there's an expense to it. actually when you're using kind of where's modern science is going when you're layering exosomes and stem cells and peptides cost can escalate sometimes quickly but she said listen just don't tell my husband but if he does learn about it i tell him can you imagine how much i'm saving in her health.

That was so that reframed my paradigm, right? Because health can be expensive, but can also save your life. So it was the same thing with my oldest one is she doesn't see problems, she sees solutions.

But the second one, she doesn't see solutions, she sees problems that she's stuck in a problem state. So now we have to work with her a little bit more to paint a picture of what solution-based management is.

And it's a game of patience. It's a game of communicating in a way that she understands because we all learn differently. And that's important. That's why I'm not necessarily proponent of schools with these large classrooms where we teach kids all the same way because we all learn differently.

And while it's difficult to have education that's hyper-polarized or hyper-specified for the individual, that's the beauty maybe of homeschooling or unschooling, maybe not accessible for everyone.

But needless to say, it's helping communicate in a way that resonates with the child in particular, that supports them for success. And painting the picture of reframing kind of how self-talk can guide you into a path where you're seeing things through a different light.

And so that's the redefining self-talk that I try to integrate all the time. And I see that from when she turned four to five, there was something that clicked within her maturity.

And she was able to disassociate with a reactionary based model where everything was negative, negative, negative to step back in honor. how she's reacting so that she can then can mitigate the reaction because she is hardwired for stress.

She was bathed in cortisol 110 percent turbo twos threes and fours okay but now I see literally and this is very recently is just more just working with her she needs a little more attention a little more love a little more support a lot more patience But it has enabled her to now reach that level of maturity where she recognizes when she's kind of going into that state.

So even the education component about that whole kind of how her physiology is implicated in terms of her consciousness. and just bringing it back down to her and suggesting, okay, you know, you're having a very high level moment here.

Let's talk about it, you know, getting down on her level and hugging her. And we always think about, you know, if someone has fallen in the mud, we got to help pull them out.

And this was beautiful with, I forgot the name of the psychologist, Dr. Becky, but it refrained my paradigm. I'm a student for life. I always want to learn.

So I'm constantly reading, constantly educating, constantly doing conferences and seminars. But new list to say is maybe instead of pulling someone out of the mud, go sit in the mud with.

and that's what I had to do with my second child. So again, it changed kind of how I was a parent because how I parent my first one is very different than the second, which is very different than the third because she's somewhere in between and she's her own little character.

But I hope that provided at least some tools or idea of how we think about it. I did. I did. And these kids, you know, they just feel like they need, you know, that extra nervous system support.

And it goes such a far way in healing. And we talked about, you know, that's why we do things like the herbal oil, just that in and of itself. It's like calming.

It really helps dial in the nervous system and then the same with, you know, our detox baths, all of that. If you add in a little like eczema safe essential oil, like frankincense, all of this just really, really helps tone down their nervous system, which again, like everything you said, it's just so required, not only just to be helpful.

be, you know, physically, but to live a happy life, like a life worth living. And so thank you for saying all that. Those are all really good tools. And everyone with more than one child, like, oh my goodness, like how, this is amazing.

And, you know, I think my baby, you know, my third daughter, the baby that was born with eczema is a lot like your second daughter. you know, she's just been my toughest one this whole time, right?

And in the good and the bad, she's also, like, the sweetest. It's just, she just lives in these extremes. And yeah, those are very, very helpful tools to help bring her in.

And I started taking, like, gala and althea and all these things, like, semi-recently just to help myself calm down and, you know, feed the energetical shift in the room.

So those are our goals, like, right? Everyone knows what's working. And yes, oh my goodness, like, just how, like, We're in the boat that we're in, but I did want to acknowledge, like you said, this costs, and unfortunately it does, you know, this is what you're dealing with, like you have no choice but to to deal with it, and there's going to be some changes that, yes, some costs are associated with that, but my goodness, like we are lucky, especially if we're dealing with this with small children.

goodness are children at all right like they're still like so young even if they're 18 is like most of their life ahead of them then it changes their whole trajectory in their life like every specialist visit how much does that cost and every pharmaceutical you know a lot of times like we go down that route because it seems cheaper in the short term but wow does it add up in the long term when you're in the system and you have to continuously go and versus just go when you're in a acute situation.

So thanks for bringing all of that to light. We're just going to finish the whole cycle, every single tangent of your foundation here. But how do you help your kids?

I mean, this is an aggregate of everything that you just talked about, but how can you help them poop right? Because we have kids on all sides of this spectrum.

A lot of them are dealing with severe, severe constipation. It's a big problem and some of them just like everything just runs through them immediately.

So how do we help our kids in that department? So I want to highlight because you mentioned the nervous system and we can only heal the speed of our nervous system and that's where it ultimately starts and most people don't realize that's dictated by the vagus nerve which innervate every side of our digestive tract.

And starting again in the brain, starting again looking at your nervous system, that's off where you pay consequences south of the border. So digestion is, you know, mouth to out or mouth to anus, but it starts with the proper signal.

And so if there's a nervous system imbalance that can cause constipation. or conversely can cause an increase in motility where you have loose or diarrhea.

Needless to say, so it starts with nervous system balance. So we mentioned some nutraceuticals. I love that you're a master formulator. So I'm looking forward to integrate your nutraceuticals in terms of our excellent patients and that kind of subset of the population.

But in general, with helping someone poop right, I take a look at the nervous system. And what I had expressed early on is what in my practice, half the people came in with gut issues, half with sleep issues.

Ultimately, that's nervous system dysregulation. So I have a very, very effective stress sleep reset to get people sleeping right and to rebalance the nervous system.

And it's natural nutrients, L-theanine with melatonin in therapeutic dosing to make a shift to calm the body, which effectively when melatonin does extremely well, and L-theanine to calm the mind.

And so even with kids, we're doing it in specific dosing to help move that needle. If for whatever reason, someone's uncomfortable with melatonin, which is a natural hormone.

we can use alternatives. Again, everything has been very safe, very effective. So we get kids sleeping right, and

definitely we get them pooping right.

So we rebalance the nervous system, we use natural nutrients, and then we figure out where the perturbation is in that digestive process. Right? Is the hypothalamus, is there improper signaling?

Is there something going on with the HRV and vagus nerve? Is the patient not secreting enough stomach acid? Looking at parietal cells and pepsin is intrinsic factor of, is there no inadequate hydrochoric acid production, which then impairs secretion of our pancreatic enzymes.

So now we're not digesting, absorbing and eliminating correctly. Is there a problem within our bile to help bind to toxins? And for constipated, we're just damaging kind of the liver with enteropathic recirculation of toxicity.

So looking at primary and secondary metabolites and bile secretion. So there is a whole chain of command that we look at. And obviously there can be problems in any one of the segments.

I don't like guessing. I like testing and treating. So that's when we integrate one of our GI tests to look at what's happening at the level of the gut.

that's disturbing healthy motility. But again, starting with something like nervous system rebalancing, very, very simple, very, very effective, is quite profound.

And then again, integrating, like I said, the test to see what's going on under. to determine where that dysfunction resides. And once we're able to plug that gap, patients heal very quickly.

Because my goal is simple. How can I get my patients better yesterday? That's how I think in terms of tie line. Because when you said there's definitely a cost component, but there's a cost component if you don't.

And you can either pay for it in sick care, or you can pay for it in health care. And unfortunately, one in two kids today has at least one chronic health condition.

That's the startling statistic. One in five, which is your patient population, eczema. One in five, obesity. One in 10, asthma. One in 13, food allergies.

One in 13, autoimmunity. What? This is things that now we're seeing with a high degree of prevalence that didn't exist a century ago. One in six with developmental disabilities.

One in 10 with ADHD. 1 in 33 estimated with autism and neurodiversions. And then what happens as they begin to age, you see anxiety, you see suicide, you see intrinsic thoughts and your mental health issues.

Poop, constipation, and digestive testing

But this to me is a perturbation of the digestive system early on. which is just exposure from either mother and father to kin or transgenerational or minimum the environmental toxic burden that we look to on our podcast and how that is driving dysfunction for digestion.

Because if you constipated yourself, two interesting, very quick stories. One high school athlete that was referred to us, she wasn't going. Her frequency was one in every 21 days.

Another 14 year old, another one a little bit younger, one in every 14 days. So one every 21 days, one every 14 days. Can you imagine how sick you're going to be if you're not brushing the toilet and leaving kind of that stool to ferment there for that long?

So when we're talking about constipation, this is getting worse and worse. And we were able to make a change very quickly in a couple of weeks. They were going every other day and then after a week and then after two weeks every day.

But too often it starts with the parents. When I ask parents, you know, what's the frequency of your bowel? And I can show them the Bristol stool chart.

What type are you? Where are you on the scale? They say, you know, I'm going every other day or every third day. And that's just normal for me. We are normalizing the abnormal.

This is not normal. There's a huge rise in breast cancer risk when you don't go three times a day or twice a day. It's like a 40% increase in risk if you're only going once per day.

But we normalize once per day, which can be okay for some. But to me, that is inadequate. That's usually inequit fibers. You asked about, you know, someone's constant.

Usually there is a problem with fiber. Usually there's a problem with dysbiosis. One of my fibromyalgia patients, she had once this strain of bacteria that was a thousand times higher than the norm, one of these pathogenic strains.

It was crippling her, but her constipation was extremely high. How interesting. So she was just fermenting the food that was enabling this pathogenic strain to have a feasting party.

And now she has a pathogenic party. And now she has autoimmunity. Now she has unexplained chronic fatigue, severe debilitating muscle issues, no energy, can't get out of bed.

And unfortunately, this is now affecting our youth as well. So we see some of these symptoms within our kids, but the good part is again, I like to test and then treat.

So we see very quickly what's happening to make a change. Yeah. Yeah. You know, they say you should do like what breaks your heart the most. It's just, that's what breaks my heart.

It's just seeing these kids, it's unhealthy. That just, it killed me. You know, my nephew has severe autism. My kid certainly struggled and everywhere you look and every You know, lately, you know, there's kids that are really struggling and just don't know how to help them.

So I'm just thankful for your work as well as to see, you know, man, the next generation. to get some of these things aligned and, you know, serve it.

But in doing that, we want to just help our kids the best that we possibly can. What would be one lifestyle with lecker that we can control to reduce inflammation?

And these people are already doing the basic things, right? Everyone listening is already on the whole food thing and they're not using bleach. So how could we just reduce inflammation over the next 90 days?

Do one thing. That's interesting because again, so assuming you're doing the eat right, sleep right, move right, talk right, poop right, which I don't know anyone is because that's why they're in our office, right?

If they were, they were perfect. And even now with anti-aging medicine or longevity medicine, people are coming to us to play in the world of your peptides and stem cells and where science is evolving too.

So those are great one of the things once you're mastering the foundation, the basics with our children and the younger subset of the population. I didn't recognize this and maybe you can empathize until I had to grow my own practice and until I had, you know, three kids myself.

And until I'm trying to be a father, be a son, be a friend, be a mentor, be a practitioner, be a partner. be, you know, things to everyone and I lost my sense of self and I had to go back and realize, okay, I do have to put myself first in order to help other people.

It's not a question of balance, it's a question of priorities, but ultimately to me, if it was one thing, it really would be

to stress less because to me I didn't realize until I had to try to be all those things how stressed out and that environment creates one where now your cup is spilling over so you're unable to deal with the toxins or the pathogen because we evolved with bacterial with bacteria with virus with fungus with parasite But we didn't evolve with all those things together and now with our modern evolution or modern environment with heavy metals, environmental toxins and stress and trauma.

So I called it my unlucky seven, but stress really has been the elephant in the room. So how can we make a safe environment? How can we make a encouraging environment.

How can we set up an environment that's more playful, that's more fun, stress less. We're all going to die. We all share the same fate. So we might as well enjoy the time we have together.

If I took anything away from the Blue Zones as an example, the two biggest things was movement, which is part of my Foundation Five and community. And it's important to find a community.

So whether, you know, people are following you and really making a change or people are subscribing to our tribe, the community that we're trying to build internationally.

What's interesting is that our relationships really will dictate our health. And that to me is a very, very overlooked component, right? We discussed the mental health component a little bit.

But the quality of our relationships with ourselves, with our peers, with our partners and with our children is really setting up a healthy, nourishing, safe environment for them to heal and thrive.

And I say this all the time because my partner, she's very much like, I'm driven for perfection and now I've had to change that to progress over perfection.

But she's very much this micromanage, like, let's do it this way, you know, structured play with it. And I'm kind of the exact opposite, maybe as typical father, like unstructured play.

I want them to be creative and imagine not plant that seed necessarily and invite them to think outside the box and teach them how to think rather just to solve a specific problem.

problem-saving, there's many solutions, there's many ways to get to things. But ultimately, it's creating that safe environment to have them be able to engage that way.

Because I say this all the time when they're at home, like, they're safe, they're going to be okay. I don't have to, you know, sit over there like, like if the house is quiet, she yells out, which I say that's not an undergo, she'll like, My oldest, I heard a day like, what do you like assuming they're doing something wrong, right?

No, like it's, it's going to be okay. So to me, the one thing is stress less, right? And while that's so simple to say, I think in practice, especially because of, you know, we're constantly on the go.

We're constantly doing the next thing. We're constantly trying to achieve. We're constantly trying to grow more. The goal post has always been, at least for myself.

is to maybe stress less and take a look at what they're doing in some of these blue zones where it's just being more communal, engaging in more communal activities and just playing more, having fun, right?

Smiling more, laughing more. We've gone away from that. We see adults that are just so solemn all the time. And we imagine why our kids become like that, right?

It's an environment that's not necessarily setting them up for success. And so the goal, I think, if it was one thing, it would be to find time to continuously engage in more play and less stress.

It's interesting because entrepreneurship 101, it's like you jump out of a plane and you hope your parachute pulls better. Right. And you're trying to figure things out along the way.

Same with parenting, like there's no necessarily playbook. And while there's models that we can replicate, I think that the premise to me is just enjoy the time we have.

There was one thing We're going to go through challenges. A challenge creates change. As an athlete, I've broken almost every bone in my body, right? I know what pain feels like.

I never want to see that in my kids, but I know things are going to happen. There's going to be adversity. Question again is 1090. How do we respond? And so we can make that choice, right?

There's always going to be a fork in the road. We can choose a path that creates a stronger bond or we can choose one that's going to break that bond.

And so my goal is how can I nurture one that we continue to strengthen our relationships, indulge in less stress and enjoy the ride.

Stress less, community, and closing thoughts

such good advice, you know, that there used to be yelling in your house and you make a cognitive like change or is it always been the case? If it's been a yell free though.

I wish to say that there isn't yelling. My partner, she's the first one to say that I'm not present because I'm constantly treating patients and working and so I'm trying to be more of a father and be more present.

That's why I came back from this little mini retreat to try to take some time and really engage with my children. I'm trying to make it more mindful decision to be a father, right?

To be there more. And so she gets overwhelmed with being a mother, as most mothers. I cannot empathize in that regard, but I can sympathize in trying to be there and just model that behavior that I want to see when I am there.

You know, how do I approach a situation so that we can all learn? And we don't always get it right. So there still is yelling. Unfortunately, she claims she's trying to do better.

I'm not trying to single her out by any stretch. She's an incredible person. We all have pros and cons. We all have blind spots too. And so my goal is to just set a healthy foundation.

So does yelling never occur? It certainly does. But it's an evolution, progress over perfection. And the goal is for her to model what healthy reaction could be so that, you know, that the terrible twos, the threes, and the fours understand what that looks like.

And so she's seeing the maturity in mom, right? So she's also having a breakthrough in her maturity. And now once you went first, you have to acknowledge the problem, right?

And again, I don't like problems. I just like solutions. But in order to fix something, we have to reframe how we react to that. And so in terms of Yelly, I wish I could say we're there and we're perfect.

But again, perfect doesn't exist. We all have some of those moments. But we can control how we show up in that moment, right? How we acknowledge that moment and taking time out for ourselves sometimes to say, Hey, you know, I just need a minute for myself right now.

It's not a good time. Okay. Or whatever the case. So I wish I can say it wasn't the case. But in general, things do improve when we can acknowledge and define it, right?

So when we see that, you know, there is something here that could use improving pot and at the goal with progress over perfection in any fashion, whether it's nutrition, whether that's trying to engage in an earlier routine for sleep, all the things that we talked about earlier.

So that's kind of how things have evolved for us. Perfect. What you're really saying is just be there, right? Like that's like the number one thing you can be there, be present and even when, you know, we're tired.

Like, everyone who's listening is very, very tired and doesn't know exactly what to do. But if you can just start there and be as calm as possible, like, luckily, you know, I felt like I was so tired, like, and still, I kind of live this life, like, I'm so tired.

Like, there's not really a lot of bandwidth for me to react. Like, I'm not a pig. reactor because it's like, okay, I don't know, just figure it out. I can't.

But if you're just there, that's enough. Just be there, enjoy them. And I know a lot of people's resolve to fix this is just like they feel like they're missing out on their child's childhood or the child themselves is missing out on it because they're scratching and because they're itchy and they're miserable.

Just keep your things in line, listening, you know, take to heart everything that Dr. Daniel said today and it'll start your everyday to getting better.

I love that. It's so perfect. So where can everybody find and follow you? If anyone has any questions, we always share our email, which is on the website info at TBD fit.com.

So that stands for total body diagnostics. So TBD fit.com. That's our website. That's also our podcast. Definitely, I love educating and guiding anyone that we can help on their healing journey.

So always feel free to shoot us an email with any questions. We're ultimately myself and my team of practitioners are at your disposal to help any way we can.

Tune into podcasts, which we had you on, which I was super excited about. As I call you the master formulator, eager to try your formulations again with our young kiddos and those suffering as well with eczema and this kind of topic, March Bud.

Thank you so much for what you're doing too, because again, both of us, we definitely have a soft place for kids, obviously as being parents ourselves.

But in general, that has really inspired my mission. And so while we started treating adults, I have been forced to treat younger adults and evolve into pediatrics because the reality is our kids are only getting more sick and it's estimated that 290 chemicals in a mom's birthing placenta.

The problem is only getting worse. But the good part is there is hope, there is treatment, there are solutions. So thank you so much. This was awesome.

My pleasure. This was one of those conversations that reminds me why eczema is never just a skin issue. If this episode helped you connect a few dots or gave you language for what you've been sensing all along, I'd love for you to leave a quick review of the podcast.

Reviews help other parents find these conversations when they're deep in the weeds and wondering what they're missing. And if you're listening thinking, okay, this is exactly what we're dealing with and I don't want to keep guessing, you can learn more about working with me inside the eczema elimination method or start by supporting the skin directly with the skin comfort trio all at eczemakids.com.

Thank you for being here, for doing the work and for continuing to show up for your kids even when it's exhausting. I'll see you in the next episode, friends.

Take care. Thank you for helping with my eczema. Love you. Thank you for listening today, friend. I know healing your child's skin isn't easy, but you're doing it one smart step at a time.

If this episode gave you a little hope or a better night's sleep, leave a quick review so more exhausted parents can find eczema kids and finally rest easy too.

Follow, share, and let's help more kids heal. Take care.