Beyond the Plate: Nourishing Kids With Self-Love And Body Awareness Transcript

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Introduction and Background

Welcome back to ADHD, Autism and Chronic Disease Parenting Summit. I'm here with the amazing Tais Harris, founder of Nourish Together. Thank you so much for being here.

Thank you for having me. I'm so excited. Awesome. I'm excited to talk about nourishing your body, nourishing your kids. But maybe we can start with a little bit more background on on you and how you got here today.

Yeah. So I'll make a long story short by just mentioning I grew up in Brazil and I moved to the US when I was 19 and had a, you know, fantastic time, fantastic life.

And then I started having some digestive issues when I was in my 20s, and I was amazed at the results I had from working with a natural Pathak doctor and just changing my diet like that took care of everything.

Like, oh, my symptoms were gone. And so I did what some people might choose to do, which is I went back to school for nutrition and I felt like stepping into a new kind of sunshine for me.

I had had a career at that point or two, actually, and, studying nutrition. At first it was just going to be for my own sake and my own benefit. But then I felt into the power of what that meant.

And the first time I helped a client feel amazing in her own skin and sort of eliminate her symptoms. The way that doctor had helped me, I really felt like I had found my purpose.

And sadly, my dad died of a very aggressive form of cancer just a month after I graduated. I had all these lofty plans of how I was going to be able to go back home to Brazil and help him.

He had a lot of health issues, and that didn't happen the way I planned it. But what it did do is that it led me to studying nutrition for cancer prevention and then eventually working with a nonprofit organization in Florida where I worked with cancer patients for five years, and we provided meals to people in cancer treatment.

And we did so by working with up to 450 teenagers a year and our gardens and kitchens. And so I had worked with kids, teaching nutrition and culinary arts.

Defining Nourishment Beyond Food

And then I worked with these teenagers, and I realized I really needed to work with families. I wanted to get to people before the diagnosis, right. To really set the foundation as early as possible for what it means to be really well nourished as a family, so that they could prevent a lot of conditions that are preventable.

Yeah. Awesome. Yeah. I mean, that's beautiful. And and just kind of diving into that a little bit because I know, you know, the word nourishment and nourishment is really important to you.

So what does that mean to you? What are what are your principles of nourishment around? You know, more than food. I know you love to talk about, like, food is important, but also there's so many other things that are important in terms of nourishing yourself and your family.

So maybe we can just start there. Yes. And so, I am very grateful. I'm married to a wonderful man who is a somatic psychotherapist. And so we actually got to develop, work together, putting together my field of nutrition with his field of psychology.

And really, we used to see so much of what was happening with his clients when he would ask them what they

were eating. You know, if people are coming in with a lot of anxiety, what was their caffeine intake like?

And there were a lot of things where he felt like he was, sort of channeling his inner ties. And when I'm working with clients, realizing so much is about mindset, and it's about all the different reward systems that were set up in our brains, right?

Sometimes around sugar consumption or, certain behaviors that we have around food that we're not happy about. So I would then be sort of channeling my inner nic, around the psychology piece.

And so we developed work together around diet as our daily intake of everything and how everything we do, just like how everything we eat, has an effect on our entire body.

We're not separate gut, heart, mind. Sometimes we talk about mental health as just like, separate thing over here, and then digestion is over here. And how could the two be connected?

Well they are, it's all one. And so this notion of nourishment is really understanding life as this big banquet. And what are the choices we make every day that actually feed, feed us and give us vitality and energy?

And how do we increase love ultimately. And so not only is about what we're ingesting food wise, but what are the thoughts that we're constantly engaging with knowing that some experts say we have about 60,000 thoughts today, and 80% of those are repetitive thoughts, right?

Sometimes subconscious, but that keep coming back. And so how are we engaging with those and how are we questioning them? And so especially for women, because after 13 years of working, a lot with a lot of people, but especially women aged 20 to 82, knowing how much our feelings of not feeling good enough can influence our health journey and will actually be the key factor in whether somebody really sticks to and achieves their long term goals versus not right or how they're able to really provide that foundation for their family, while also making sure that their own needs are met.

So I think especially for moms, it can be very overwhelming trying to do everything right to nourish everybody and then also nourish themselves. But just back to this notion of nourishing from a perspective of what first is our intention for ourselves and our families.

Do we make time to envision what is our best life and our best self and our best health? And then how are we engaging each day with the world around us through what we are putting in our mouths, but also what we're putting in our minds, the media that we're consuming, right, the way we're communicating and our relationships.

Self-Love and Positive Self-Talk

All of that then becomes the sort of, you know, rounded circle from which we can actually achieve great health and provide a great foundation for our family.

Yeah, I definitely agree. And one of the things that really resonated with what you said that I've, you know, talked a lot about more recently is like kind of the self-talk, you know, I think a lot of people, are more anxious these days, are more depressed, are more negative in their thinking.

There's a lot of stressful things going on in the world. I mean, social media in the news doesn't it doesn't really help. But how do you, you know, kind of counsel your, your families on, on or what do you think is important in terms of how do we change that, how we change some of our self-talk?

How do we kind of move to a more positive direction? So the first item for me where we start with is self-love. And I know self-love can be kind of a wishy washy, you know, it means different things to different people.

And some people even tell me, well, of course I love myself. And then the next question is, so what are the actions you take every day to show that love?

And so that then creates, you know, a different way of thinking of like, oh yes, sometimes we're really good at showing love to others, to our kids, our partners.

Right. And we don't we may not have a way to actually showing that to ourselves. And this is really important because the absence of that is a big sort of range from just having low self-esteem to all the way to self-loathing.

And loathing is a loaded word, but what it means is a deep dissatisfaction. And in some surveys we see that up to 90% of women, for example, have at least one.

I hate my body type of thought a day. So what that does and how that trickles down to our kids is that, you know, our kids are soaking up who we are and what we do, right?

It's not so much what we say, but what we do. And so if the message is constantly, I'm not good enough, and there's many ways that we can send out that message.

So, for example, my mom is a wonderful mother and amazing dedicated. But what I grew up hearing was that women were never good enough. And and it was from a lot of different ways.

For example, she never saw a picture of herself and said something nice every time she would see a picture of hers, I was like, oh, delete that. Oh, my hair looks horrible.

Oh, my thighs are so big. Oh, and so to me that was what was normal. I grew up having that same internal dialog too, and so I had to really like look at that question, that and actively change that so that I could hear, for example, when I had skin cancer, and then something in the book, The Life Changing Power of Self-love, my chapter is really focused around that, how self-love really helped me heal, because we have to start paying attention to what we are telling ourselves, and then actively changing that message.

When that message is negative. So we start with self-love. It makes us more open to to receive nourishment in a different way. And like when our choices, when we make choices everyday based on love and really caring for ourselves versus the like, oh, I should do this, I shouldn't do that.

I know the do's and don'ts and shoulds and punishment and my doctor told me so, or my nutritionist told me so. We don't sustain that long term because somewhere we're feeling like there's something wrong with us.

If we start building ourselves up and it's coming from a place of love, now we have this team that we need to keep going again and again. And so and that carries over to our kids, because now they're not seeing this message that something is wrong.

I'll never be good enough. They're actually seeing a different parent that can actually model what it's like to have nourishment, to choose things that are helping us feel more whole and, you know, more vibrant.

Find that it's helpful to have these discussions with kids on, you know, talking about some of the things that you're doing yourself and then maybe working with them.

You know, like, oh, you know, I've heard some people say like, oh, we should start every morning with a gratitude or, or, you know, you can say like, well, you know, I want to do this, this and this.

And I would like to do that as a family. And I want, I want everybody to be very, you know, positive at dinnertime. And let's, let's talk about some things that we're grateful or whether it's first thing that we're like, what?

What do you suggest for families in terms of actionable steps for, for, you know, kind of those first few things that you would want them to do. Perfect.

I love that because I feel like so the first step when we start with ourselves, right?

Family Practices for Mindful Nourishment

The mother, the father, and we have a practice of making sure that we're being compassionate with ourselves, that we're speaking kindly of ourselves, especially in front of our kids.

So we don't we see a picture, even if we don't like it how we look. We find something in the picture we love and we comment on that first. If we need to make a comment or, when we see ourselves in the mirror, catch our reflection right that we can smile.

I literally say good morning every morning in the mirror. Just the way I say good morning to my son, right? If I was just silent, if I just ignored him, or if I just did the like, oh, how would he react?

Right? How would he grow up if that was how somebody was reacting to him all the time? And we adults tend to do that to ourselves way too often. So when we just change that, something in us actually just automatically changes, makes us more open, more compassionate, and we'll be more compassionate in how we're communicating with the kids as well.

Then the step two, coming back to that notion of diet as daily intake of everything, and what is nourishment? I love thinking about gut, heart and mind and having practices that nourish all three.

So for gut, I really think about presence and how we really need to sort of slow down, especially at meal times. And meal times give us at least three times a day, like we have this opportunity to think about, you know, the body, to take a deep breath.

And so presence is really about taking a deep breath before eating. I love the gratitude piece is huge. And for some people it really works. At dinner more than breakfast.

Sometimes breakfast is really rushed. So in our family, we talk about something we're grateful for at dinner, and it just helps set our whole system into a parasympathetic state, which is the rest, and digest.

So no matter what happened that day, really stressed out. We take a deep breath, we bring a gratitude to mind. And now our body's, you know, our vagus nerve starts adjusting everything to kind of slow down so we can actually send energy to digestion, which is what we need so much.

And we also practice chewing slowly. So that's the other part of presence. So many digestive discomforts can come from us just eating fast all the time.

And so again, if we model that to our kids, we may need to ask them sometimes I have to ask my son like, hey sweetie, it's not a race. Like, hey, we're all here together.

We have time. Let's just take a bite at a time. But if they see us always eating really fast, us saying that I can't do much right? So we can use this notion of gut and presence to just kind of slow down at meal times.

And that will help everybody in the family. Then when we come up to the heart and think about connection. So setting an intention to really connect again, meal time is can be a wonderful, time to do that.

You know, as we said, there's so much ritual around eating. Sometimes we don't have those rituals other times of the day, but we can go like, okay, so God is good.

We have our presence. We have the time right now to take our bodies to this rest and digest it. And now my intention is really to connect with my family.

So really looking each other in the eye, right when we ask, how is your day? Are we actually listening? Is our phone put away or is our phone at the dinner table?

Which is a unfortunately, a really bad habit that some of us have to always having a phone with us. And what it does is it sets the tone for the people around us that they are not important or not the most important at that moment.

And so we take distractions away, take phone away so that for nourishment, for the heart is it really is about connection and setting the intention to connect.

And then we think, I think about the mind and what it means to be mindful or do mindful eating. And it's part of like really seeing our plate by taking in the aromas, the visuals of our food, because digestion starts in the brain.

And so when we can just take a moment all the communication that needs to happen between between the brain and the pancreas, the stomach, it all starts happening right when we're not in a hurry.

And we can acknowledge, like being together and taking our time and what are certain things like in my house, sometimes we talk about, how were you kind today or what did you feel today?

Like there's, you know, we don't have a set routine of questions that we asked you. Depends on each day, but there are different ways of engaging and connecting, sticking to that intention of connecting so that other things can come up and it can bring this mindfulness and compassion to the whole family.

Yeah. I'll just say that that's such great points. I mean, it's it's just so important to be mindful. We're not mindful enough these days of even the little things.

And I do find also, you know, that, that what you're saying is very actionable because, you know, you want to find times a day we're actually going to do it, whether it's meal time or first thing in the morning or whatever it is.

Otherwise it's not, you know, it's not going to happen. We all get so busy. So I, I like that, you know, really focusing around even meal time is, is a great chance to, to really be mindful about all of those things.

So yeah, I think that's that's fantastic. Yeah. And that's one we know. Go ahead. Now you got just that. We can we can be eating the healthiest food on Earth.

But if we're doing it in a hurry or eating when we're upset, you know, the other thing about mind is making sure. Is everybody feeling safe at the table?

Is everybody feeling good and not necessarily being in a good mood? But if somebody if there's if there was drama right before dinner time and somebody is still upset, allowing for that to be worked out before we eat is super important, right?

We don't want to be eating upset like digestion does. Won't happen the same way. Again, that vagus nerve can then get stuck and fight or flight and so a lot doesn't happen.

We are not going to assimilate the nutrients. So I feel like having almost like this body map with like gut, heart mind just helps get a little bit of a tone for as we sit in front of the in front of our meal, like knowing that there are these touchpoints that we can then think about so that as we eat, even if it's not the most healthy meal, knowing this will nourish us because we're in the right state of mind.

We are in rest and digest. We are connected to ourselves, to each other. Our breathing pattern is deep, you know, and slow, and there's oxygen going everywhere.

Yeah. And I mean, I, I love that and, you know, I do love to finish with, actionable steps and you take lots of actionable things today, but I really like to think about something that a parent could do today or this week that they could kind of move themselves in a more positive direction for their family's health.

And I'm curious for you if that would be starting with self-love, or would you would would it be something else?

What would be your like number one actionable tip for for today?

I'm guessing it's self-love, but we'll see. It as a self-love. And I think the main part of it is the listening.

Curiosity, Repair, and Where to Find Nourish Together

So this notion of paying attention with curiosity, not judgment. And what I mean by that is sometimes one of my clients start the self-love piece. It can actually bring a little anxiety or like, oh my God, I caught myself doing that.

I saw I wake up and I when I look in the mirror, I think you look terrible. Like, oh how horrible. That's right. And the the idea is, no, we're not doing this for you to now find one more thing to judge yourself about, right?

Like now we're actually just trying to understand how are we behaving so that we can change the behavior. And I think as parents, I know for me it can be really easy to be like, oh my God, that I just talk to my son that way.

I can't believe I did that. And and it's that reminder of no. Oh, I heard how I spoke to him. Now I can go make a repair. And so I think that the notion bringing back the self-love piece, but really with the focus on the listening, is that when we learn to listen with that curiosity both to how are we speaking to ourselves and our minds and our heads, we also start noticing how we're speaking to others.

It's like how we if if we can increase self-compassion, we actually become more compassionate towards others and especially our kids. And in nonviolent communication, I love that there's this notion of that we don't collaborate with the enemy so that when somebody comes and speaks to us in a certain way, where we kind of see them as an enemy, we're not going to want to collaborate.

There's like immediately we'll put some sort of wall. So when we're talking to ourselves in a way that's always critical and judgmental, the same thing can happen.

We don't want to collaborate with that, right? So we create more obstacles to whatever goal we have. And it's the same thing with our kids. So if we're going to talk to them and we already have an agenda, we're coming in with a criticism or a judgment, they might not want to collaborate with us.

So if we listen with that curiosity, it's more about like, how am I talking to myself? How am I talking to my kids? And can I come in from this place of curiosity versus criticism or judgment?

That's like step number one, and I think it can open a lot of doors internally for communicating better, both inside and out. Definitely. Well, thank you so much for sharing your wisdom and, this beautiful message.

I really appreciate it. Maybe you can tell people a little bit more about where to find you and, like your socials and that kind of stuff. Thank you. Yeah.

So you can find me at Nourish together.com. That's my website. And I'm on Instagram at Nourish Dot together and also on Facebook at Nourish Together. And on YouTube, nourish together.

And so it's all nourish together. And I hope to connect with everyone. That's perfect. Well, thank you again for for joining us. And thank you everyone for listening and have a wonderful rest of the day, and we'll see you in the next session.