Introduction to Katie Kimball

Welcome to the Bio Optimized Summit, where we explore the next level of physical and mental health you can reach through intentional and targeted optimization.

I am your host, Doctor Amy, and today we have Katie Kimball. And I had just finished giving my speech. I was the first one. I sat down and here walks Katie onto the stage and delivers a very moving.

It was not a speech. It was, it was a story. And she won that speaking contest. And I walked up to her afterwards, and I'm like, what? What is your secret?

And she told me her secret. She told me that she had trained with this person. And that has kind of really started Katie's and my friendship, over the last year.

And so I'm so excited that she is joining us today. And she is the founder and CEO of Kitchen Stewardship. And so what she does is she helps, teach kids how to actually cook real food, healthy food, and is a real asset and resource for moms and parents who are wanting to, teach their kids these skills and have their kids actually have these very practical skills.

And that is very much what I can relate to from my own parenting program, that I coach parents with. And so having these shared values, Katie, has been really awesome, for us to get to know each other over the last year, she has, my goodness, she has spoken a lot over the last 11 years.

She's done podcasts. She's become a trusted authority and advocate for children's health. And so busy moms are looking to Katie for the honest, in-depth, natural product reviews and thorough research.

And she is partnering with health experts and medical practitioners to stay on the cutting edge. She has created The Wall Street Journal recommended Best Online Kids cooking course in 2016, and then as the host of the Kids Cook Real Food.

A mom of four kids herself in Michigan, married to her awesome husband, Chris. Thank you, Katie, for joining us today. Oh, it's so good to be here, Amy.

And that's you know, you talked about the story of sort of when we met. And that's what I love about you so much is that you were like, what's your secret?

Self-Esteem, Mental Health, and the Kitchen

Like, you're like so motivated. And when you're going to do something, you're going to do it all in and you're going to do it well. So I know that that's what people, listeners are experiencing in the summit.

Well, let's let's talk about what you do. And your role is so important. And I'm so glad that our worlds have have intersected and come together, because you are really filling a niche when it comes to kids.

And it's not just cooking food, it's actually giving them a sense of accomplishment, a sense of purpose, which really is the foundation for their self-esteem and mental health, especially in times like this where there's a lot of change, there's a lot of uncertainty, there's a lot of change in their routine.

People are feeling lost. And so it's like, this is such a big issue right now for being able to give kids a sense of accomplishment and purpose and meaning and belonging all through the skills that you teach them.

So yeah, talk to us about self-esteem and mental health and how that ties into what you do. Yeah. I mean, I feel like kind of since our generation are kind of the parents generation have been kids.

There's been this huge movement toward improving self-esteem, increasing self-esteem, and it's not working. It's not working at all. I mean, we know in just a ten year span, we've seen depression increase 30% in our teens.

You know, like 1 in 3 teens are depressed or anxious. And, I even spoke with teachers in our elementary school last year for a project, and they were saying they've seen this shift to in elementary school.

They can feel the anxiety, especially when it's standardized testing month, the entire the entire like atmosphere in the third and fourth grade, wing changes.

And even the kindergarten teacher said that they're seeing they're seeing such anxiety like they've never seen, you know, and we're talking like a decade ago.

We've got, you know, a kindergarten teacher told me that it's not uncommon to have a kid just sitting there in the the mudroom or other, like outdoor clothes that are just just yelling, I can't find my shoes.

And the child has not even looked for their shoes. So not only are they sort of freaking out and having a breakdown, but they have no idea how to advocate for themselves.

So the self-esteem movement, telling everyone that they're doing a good job and way to go, and participation medals for everyone, absolutely not working.

It's definitely, you know, it's not it's not the way to go. Kids need to know that they're doing meaningful work. They need to know that they're authentically contributing to society and that they can have strong bonds with adults.

Like that's going to be the foundations of balanced mental health that they need so that they can, you know, grow into adulthood and function and, and survive in the world.

So I see, I see the kitchen as the best arena for teaching all of those skills, for building all of those capacities. In our kids and our members see it too.

We we do like quick little surveys, like, what do you see of the benefits and stuff? And time and time again, members, they're actually surprised to say, well, it's actually the confidence.

It has nothing to do with the food. But when they're teaching their kids to cook, they see that confidence. And it even spills out into other areas of life.

And it really is so, centered around the kitchen, which of course, is food. And that gets us into nourishment. And so it's not just the actual skills that you're helping them learn, but it's fostering that bond and that connection that naturally happens over food when we share that, you know, taking in nourishment with other people and with our family.

And so it's it's also encouraging the family to have that meal time, to have that connection over a meal where they're not only getting the physical nourishment, but they're getting the emotional nourishment from that relationship and building that relationship.

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it's it's cool that this is the bio optimized summit. So if we're going to look at, you know, every part of our life, well, how can we optimize that family dinner.

Step one have family dinners. You know, studies show that the benefits for kids, especially especially adolescents, especially teenagers, they're less likely to engage in risky behaviors, drugs and alcohol.

They're less likely to, you know, have depression and suicidal tendencies. The benefits start at just two family

dinners per week. More is better. But but I like the fact that it doesn't have to feel overwhelming.

You know, it's not that we have to eat family dinner every single night, or our kids are lost cause just start, start and shoot for two.

Family Dinner as a Health Habit

And if it's if we see the benefits in adolescents, we've got to start those habits younger. You know as well. And so how do we optimize that time at the family dinner.

Well we make sure that a we're there be that we're eating good nourishing food. I, I really advocate for conversations about food. Families definitely find that when they're talking about the food that they're eating, when the kids are involved in cooking, it's a smoother process.

They're going to eat healthier. But also we, you know, we have a strategy where we talk about the three meals at the dinner table, not every night, because nobody wants to do the same thing every night. But our three meals are when did you laugh? Today.

What did you learn and how did you love someone else? And so now we're optimizing laughter and humor. And that's a great stress relief. And we're, you know, bonding as a family.

We're optimizing. How do we talk about learning instead of how was school today? Fine. Right. You know, that's all you're going to get. But if you say, what did you learn?

That child has to dig into their memory and think of something they learned. And it's such a good example for my kids when my husband and I will say, you know what?

We learned to demonstrate that we're still lifelong learners. And and learning is not all about, you know, academics and head knowledge. Sometimes we learn, we tell a story of something.

We failed at that day, and we learned that that's not the way it works, right? Because that's how people learn. And then when did you love others? That's optimizing for just I want my kids to build a servant's heart and be thinking about other people.

You know, I have a five year old and five year olds are inherently egotistical. You know, they're kind of built to only think about themselves. So it's so good to stretch those capabilities and have them thinking about thinking about other people.

So that's one way that we optimize family dinner. And just optimizing the family relationship, again, is the kids being the ones to participate in this process of the family relationship of this family time, rather than them doing their own thing, whether it's homework or playing, and then just being called in for family dinner, there's not as much engagement and participation in their part because they didn't contribute to that.

And when they are the main ones who are learning how to prepare these meals, how much more awesome is that than for them to be more engaged in the family bond, because they helped create that bond that evening.

Yeah. I mean we definitely see that when kids can share the responsibility everybody wins. You know, my kids might not always be happy about doing chores, but I know that that's such a strong investment in their future.

And I mean I got to say so many stories come in to me about moms who say, you know, we we just had our fifth child, and I do not know how life would be running if my kids weren't able to make breakfast on their own because I'm just, you know, I'm tired.

I'm done. And I think the most powerful story is about a mom named Sarah who was pregnant with her third and just, I mean, just horrible pregnancies, total bed rest and very, very sick the whole time.

Like the stack of things that were wrong with during her pregnancy is just intense. And then her husband had two surgeries in, during the same time. So there were no adults in the household who could stand at a counter and prepare food.

Her boys were eight and 12 at the time, and they had to vacuum. They had to do laundry, they had to prepare dinner. And, you know, it wasn't all easy Mac and cereal, which is amazing.

But the point is, the training has to happen before the crisis hits. Right. So, you know, Sarah was incredibly grateful to, you know, four years ago Sarah who happened to teach her kids to cook using kids cooked real food.

She built, you know, some chore system so that they kind of knew with just some little instruction from mom in bed with the 2% of energy she had, they were able to keep that household running for months.

And I mean, not only not only was that, like, literally necessary for survival of the family, but how great too. Those boys feel that they can help keep their family afloat.

And the future daughters in laws will be thinking Sarah too. I'm sure. Well, in what's coming to my mind right now is the self-esteem of these boys.

Kids Cooking and Better Food Choices

They're not going to have that experience of interacting with other kids and feeling those, put downs in those shames as much because they've got that experience integrated into their brain, into their memory, into their nervous system, that, no, I am useful.

And this is how I know I'm useful. Because I was able to do this. I am able to do this. That's not something you can take away from a kid. When you've given them these skills and these experiences of I can cook a healthy meal for my family.

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Another mom in our program. Susan, she's got kids like the whole range, like she's launched some and has some in her 20s and she's constantly kind of coaching other families in our program like you guys this is worth it.

Like nothing I did with, you know, my 23 year old, my 26 year old has had more impact than teaching them to cook. And and she's already she's at that wonderful stage where her kids are actually seeing how good her parenting is. Right?

Because nobody sees that until you're launched. So she's getting like, oh, thanks, mom. I'm so glad that I can, like, host this dinner party and know what I'm doing.

And and I mean, these this these are, like, real adult skills. Her her young adults are not wasting their time taking adulting classes. They're actually investing in their relationships and their careers the way they ought to be in their early 20s.

And that's that's what I want for my kids, too. Absolutely. And I'm going to circle back around to that, Katie, because that's another, aspect of you and your program that I absolutely love.

And I'm very aligned with and, very much built on that in my parenting program. So I want to talk about that. But in the meantime, let's let's stay on this topic of healthy food and the definition of healthy food for kids.

And our world these days, especially in the Western countries, kids have a very different relationship with food. And when they think of cooking, if they were to cook something, it would be something from out of a box right where they just have to add water.

It's not actually exactly. It's the microwave and water. It's not it's not real food. It's not healthy food. It's not

nourishing food. And and then there's all of the, there can be this perspective of the food that I really want is the chips and, you know, all of the processed food and the candy.

And so they're, they're they're needing to have that shift where it's coming from inside of them, rather than their parents having to tell them. No, like, that's not healthy.

This is what you're going to eat. And there's that. There can be that battle. So how do you help with that, with that shift in that re reworking of their view and relationship with food and what is nourishing food?

You know, our culture has done such a disservice to kids by creating this idea of a kids meal, okay? And that's that's just in the last century, ironically, kids meals in restaurants where we're originally created to be like, like doctors would tell the restaurant what was healthy and they would have these, like, healthy versions.

And then somehow it shifted into, you know, a Happy Meal with junk food and a toy. And kids menus in restaurants are this completely, like bland palette.

You go into a Mexican or an Italian restaurant and they're still being offered chicken nuggets, mac and cheese and burgers. It's like so. So we've put our children's palates in this box, you know, called kid friendly food, which is never healthy, never whole foods very bland and, and of course, you know, their taste buds are exploding with all the processed foods and the MSG.

They're not going to say, boy, oh, I wish I had a carrot right now. You know, like but but they will rise to the expectations if we can reset those. So that's why I'm on a mission to revolutionize the meaning of a chance meal.

Like it's time to redefine it. A kid's meal should not be a separate meal from an adult. It shouldn't be separate options on a menu. It shouldn't be exhausted.

Parents cooking two or even three meals because of selective eating tendencies like no, no, no, no. If we want to have a kid's meal, it should be one that a kid has cooked for their family.

That's that's how I want to redefine that. And when kids are involved in cooking, they they eat better. Absolutely like it. Again, it's not magic pixie dust.

It's not like, oh, my kid cuts a carrot. They will definitely eat it. Not on the first try. But there's actually a lot of really cool science, both brain science and like physiology science behind why being involved with food encourages kids to taste that food.

And one is just that open loop, right? Like humans don't really like open loops. We like to kind of have closure and finish what we start. So when kids are involved at the beginning of the meal, there's a little bit of their brain that's saying maybe I should finish that loop and eat it right.

Also, we know that that your, your palate is like like the first bite is the best tasting bite. And this is a good thing, right? So if you're out at a restaurant, if you're like 50/50 bite of your steak, taste it as good as the first.

You'd be very overweight because you would never want to stop eating. Right. So it's it's the way that we're designed that food gets less and less exciting in our mouths as we get satisfied.

But what's what's cool about that is that when you're involved with food, your senses are already beginning to sense those for. So for kids who are really selective eaters, maybe because their sensory system is running a little high and everything, they kind of need that bland food because everything tastes too intense.

They're almost dulling their palate by being involved with food, by having those smells and like accidentally licking your fingers, you know?

Building Skills Through Gradual Responsibility

And so by the time they're at the table, their palate is more adjusted to those foods. That's a second thing. And also there's the whole pressure and power struggle issue.

You know, if parents are at the table saying you have to eat your vegetables, you need to clear your plate, neither of which are good things to say anyway, by the way.

But they happen, there's a lot of a lot of pressure and a lot of stress in a child's brain when they look at a plate of food and feel that they are going to have to eat it, even if the parent is not saying that there's an expectation at the table that you're going to eat.

And that's stressful. And now the sympathetic nervous system is turning on and the child is not interested in food. They're not going to digest it. Well, anyway.

In the kitchen, there's not that pressure to eat. So they can kind of make friends with food and get used to it and get acclimated to that food without even the sensation of that power struggle.

And again, that's going to kind of grease the chute, as you go to the table. Plus, kids are just proud of what they make, which, you know, comes back to self-esteem.

But it also really helps with selective eating. When they're so proud of it, they're more likely to try it. And if they don't, it's it's still a win. It's still a win.

If they're involved with food, it's still a win. If they've created food to serve someone else. Right. It's a win of a different kind. Maybe not the the nourishing food kind, but you're now you're still still building incredible skills and qualities in those kids, and especially when the kids know the nourishing properties of the foods, there's a sense of pride that they get when they can bring health to other people.

And they know that it's healthy. They know that it's going to be helpful to that person's body, to their mind, to their overall health, rather than, sharing something that they know is not going to be as helpful.

They get even more of that sense of of, again, self-esteem and a healthy pride in their ability to, provide healthy things to other people. Yeah, absolutely.

I mean, my my two older kids. So I have Paul is 15 and Leah's 12. And so they've been actually making dinner for our family for the last three years. And that started because I wanted to volunteer with high school youth groups.

My husband said, this is not going to go well. This is at dinner time. Like, you will be so stressed when you're leaving and the whole family's going to sit there at the table like, great.

Like, this is we have a half cooked dinner and a stressed out mom just left in the minivan. So I asked Paul and Leah if they would be willing to cook on those Sunday nights.

So not only was it a way that, like, our whole family was kind of serving our high school youth at church, but also they they had that responsibility where they, you know, the first year they just did pizza, they did homemade pizza every night.

And that was great because they got to learn like basically how to make a recipe by heart, you know. And it was it was really easy. And it was sort of a habitual routine.

Then the next year, every other week, they had to plan it themselves. So it's kind of this gradual release of responsibility, and learning a different skill set all the time.

So now they cook dinner once a week. It's tonight actually Wednesday nights. So I'm, I'm looking forward to a full workday around about 5:00. It'll start to smell good and I have no idea what they're making, but that's it's okay.

Like because we've we've built that over time. But they definitely they have a pride in that. They, you know, they tell their friends that they're cooking and we're always we always make it a point to thank them.

You know, that this is so good. And their little, little brothers will both thank them. So you can just. Yeah, you can see you can see the pride in that.

And, and they definitely look at and nutritious food too. I mean my daughter is, is really into baking right now with all the time at home in the spring and throughout the summer.

And she's always looking at kind of the sugar content. And mom, is this, is this healthy or is this okay? Is this kind of a treat? And she'll make bowl, you know, she'll make treats.

But but try to keep them with at least whole ingredients. So it's been a really good really good summer, really good process of like how do we read ingredients.

And you know, we'll look at something in the store and go, oh, we could make that at home without some of these weird extra ingredients. You know? So it's just, again, empowering to think this is this is what processed food is doing in the store.

Well, I can do that myself. So I'm very curious to hear what your process is, Katie, and what you would encourage other parents to do if they wanted to get their kids more in the kitchen and eventually get them to the place where they were cooking a whole meal by themselves and could trust them to do that?

Well, right. What I really encourage my parents do with the kids that we work with is have them in the kitchen. So when you're cooking, I want your kids in the kitchen with you so that we can maintain that connection in that relationship, since that's really important for the kids that I work with.

And for you, like what? What does that process look like? What? How do you start parents in this in this transition of building up to their kids, being able to cook a meal all by themselves?

Yeah. There's two big mental blocks that parents have to get over, and one is to raise the bar on our expectations of what our kids can handle. And the second is to kind of release our control over wanting the kitchen to be our space, you know?

And that's really hard for mom sometimes. That's the haven. At the end of the day, you put a podcast and you cook. You're like, go away, children. But the investment in their future is worth far more than that podcast.

Plus, once you once you've gone through the process and they're cooking for you, you get to go for a walk with your podcast. That's even better. But I think raising I mean, raising the bar is, is number one.

We we hosted a virtual summer camp this summer for all the parents who are stuck at home, and we actually had over 10,000 families around the world participating was absolutely amazing.

And the stories of the little tiny children and what they were able to do are just some of my favorites, right? So, one mom, Courtney, talked about her kids, and she said, you know, they love to help.

And I let them help make pancakes, and I measure and they dump and they stir and I fix it, you know? Right. Like, that is a totally common story where they're just, like, they're just barely helping.

And that's still even if that's all you can do, though, if your kids are ages 2 to 5, that's still important. And just to keep that positive attitude, because that's the key for the preschool crowd, is just to have a positive impression of what being in the kitchen feels like.

However, if you can teach some of those skills, right, it's not about can my two year old make pancakes? No. But could your three year old measure a teaspoon of salt flat?

Could they do that by themselves? Yes they can. And so if they can be the salt master now, they feel so much more involved in those pancakes. Have them measure that salt into a little bowl and you can, you know, kind of check their work and make sure they don't measure a tablespoon instead of a teaspoon. We've had that.

We've had that in our house with tortillas before. It doesn't go well. But but if kids can learn these skills of like, this is what we, you know, we teach five different ways to stir with with goofy names like pogo stick and merry go round.

So the kids, the kids know. So this mom, Courtney, whose kids used to help make pancakes, they're her kids are two and five and they're making like 90% of the pancake batter by themselves.

Now, just because she was able to train them in measuring and stirring like those are doable for kids, they're going to take a long time. But I think if we can raise our bar on our expectations, that will help a lot.

Once kids are in school, once they're in early grade school, like for a second and third grade, it's time to raise the bar again. Like, yes, they can use sharp knives.

Yes, they can get to the stove, you know, like they they've gone from barely being able to write their name in just two years. Now they can write full paragraphs.

So if they can measure that teaspoon of salt flat at age four, well, shoot them up to the stove by age seven because that's how quickly their brain and their small motor control is developing.

So again, just keeping keeping these really positive in the kitchen, raising the bar, instilling the confidence in the kids that they can have a role in the family and that responsibility and just kind of like that gradual release, like I said, with with my kids, we started with the same recipe every week.

Chores, Leadership, and Family Systems

And and having that just sort of be a habit in their body. So even if you can just build think like, okay, what's one skill, what's one little tiny skill? Maybe it's peeling a cucumber.

That would happen very regularly at dinner. And I'm going to just teach my child one skill and see what happens, don't I? That's that's a huge mental block to we don't need to think about how do I teach my kids to cook?

It's how do I teach my kids to measure a teaspoon of salt? Break that down so that you don't get stuck. It's you got any forward progress is good progress.

And I remember working with a mom, Karen, and she had, three and a half, four year old son, Tommy. And she would sit him up on the counter with her and she would be, you know, doing all of the all of the other stuff for the meal prep.

And it would come time to measure the salt, in fact. And he was he was the salt person. And he would like just the look on his face is he would anticipate it.

Right. And he would he would see that the time was coming and his body would start to move around and and he'd get so happy because he knew that his part was coming, and then he'd measure it.

And, and just the focused that like, he took this very seriously and he'd measure the salt and he'd put it in the bowl. And then it's like his body would wiggle again, and you can clap his hands like just the delight that he has in I'm important.

I play an important role. I'm the salt person, right. And and that sense of belonging, that sense of of accomplishment and the bond that that creates with him and his mom, that she allows him to be a part of that process with her.

And as they're co-creating this thing called food. Yeah. And then the I mean, the compliments are built right in. So whenever, you know, when we're at the table, my, one of my favorite jobs is to make bulk homemade taco seasoning.

So every time we have tacos, we can say, okay, thanks for making your tacos taste so good. Even if he wasn't involved in that meal. So, yeah, if you've got a salt master, and salt always makes everything taste better. You know?

Thank you, Tommy, for making our meal taste so good. And that that's far better than, like. Oh, I like your drawing. I'm going to put it up on the fridge.

There's there's authenticity and there's trying to hurt you. Yeah. So this is a perfect transition to talk about the other expectations that we can have for our kids.

And again, like this just makes my heart sing, Katie. Because this is something that that I work a lot with parents. And there's been a shift in our society and our world that, you know, kids, kids do their thing.

They play, they, you know, they're they're off and it's us as the adults, as the parents with all the responsibility and all of the work. And they're we have very low expectations for what our kids can do and a very low threshold for them saying I can't.

And we step in and we do it for them. And I love your perspective. And I remember watching the video that you made with, you know, you helping your son tie his shoelaces and then making his, his lunch snack and just the concept that you're presenting and that when, when we can have these realistic expectations for our kids, it it sets them up for success for the rest of their life.

And not only that skill, but then just in their ability to see themselves as capable. Yeah. And and so one of the things that I, coach my parents with is having their kids be responsible and having those expectations that they're going to have their bed made by the time they leave their room in the morning.

Something as simple as that. But yet it's it's been it's been lost a lot in our in our world. And the tendency of the responses that I usually get are there too young for that.

Like they can't make their bed and and so it's like, okay, we need to readjust our expectations of what our kids can actually do because they are they are growing.

They are learning. They are capable of so much more than what we give them credit for. And when we can see them and speak into their potential, there's so much more.

Again, just this self-esteem. And that's how with the self-esteem is built, is in their ability to do things and accomplish things. It's not from us just telling them words.

It's in their ability to be a productive member of the family where they get their self-esteem. So what are some of the other expectations, that you encourage parents to have?

And what are what are some of the expectations that you have had for your kids that have worked out well, yeah. Doctor Amy, there's so much tension around this issue of chores.

And I think kind of historically, you can see like generations sort of go in waves. And I feel like our parents generation wanted to make our lives easier.

They wanted our childhoods to be easier than theirs. And they thought that meant that we should get to play and not have to do chores. And that's kind of where that this was set up.

Before that, kids always did chores. I mean, there was a time where you'd have more children, so you could have

more farm workers, probably a little too far in the other direction.

Right. Like where can we find the middle ground? But but it it creates so much tension. I know I just got an email from, a friend of mine who's a blogger last night who said, you know, I'm always second guessing.

Am I doing the right thing by like, asking my kids to be responsible for themselves? Or am I just being lazy? Maybe I'm just being lazy. Am I doing enough work?

And I thought, that's totally a conversation I have in my head as well. And I think it causes tension sometimes even between parents. When one of my readers came to me once and said, listen, I homeschool, my kids are responsible for making their own breakfast and their own lunch.

And my husband is is calling me lazy. What? What do I do to convince him that this is the right thing to do to build life skills? And I said, can I take this to the audience?

Can I take this to the team? So I just kind of like, shared her story anonymously on social media. And and by and large, mothers were like, oh, no, like the husband is wrong.

It takes so much more work to train kids and to keep up with them and remind them to make their bed before they leave the room. Right. So much more work to have kids do things at the end to do it ourselves.

Ultimately. Yeah. I mean, you do get a little time back and you do get a little time off, but but it definitely, you know, it's not lazy. So I have to say that to moms. It's not lazy.

You're not offloading your work. You're balancing the family and you're balancing that tension in your head. I also think there's a terrible comparison us in the social media world.

Right. And then that goes both ways, too, you know, you'll see like, oh, these people are going on vacation. I wish I was on vacation. And, and I'll follow people like, a mom who has her kids at eight years old, like buying things with debit cards and making phone calls to pay bills.

And I'm like, oh, I'm not doing that. Maybe I'm not doing enough, but what am I missing? Right? Like, you can you can comparison this yourself anywhere.

So let's just be inspired by other moms who are doing good things right. If you see other kids doing chores, be inspired to allow that to raise your expectations.

As far as what we've done in our family, again, it's a ton of ebb and flow. We're always reinventing and trying to make new systems. This summer we did something interesting, because again, we had this is like 2020 pandemic year.

So we had March and April and May or they were all home from school and everything was weird. And then we had Summer. My husband and I both work at home anyway, we did before this, so we were prepared.

At least we didn't have to change working, except for the fact that there are these four people running around our house all the time. When we used to have from 9 to 3 to work, you know?

So we said, okay, here's our new summer system. Each day of the week, one of the older children and, you know, eight, 12 and 15 is household manager. And that household manager is responsible for serving the snacks that day between 9 and 10 and between 3 and 4.

That household manager is responsible for getting out lunch. And basically lunch is like, what's the oldest leftover hello, fridge?

Mentorship, Problem-Solving, and Confidence

What do we have in here? And we just eat leftovers for lunch? And they're responsible for making sure everyone else is doing their chores. So we're not not only are we making sure the chores get done, but we're trying to build some leadership.

I mean, it's been a couple months. I don't I don't know how it's going yet on building leadership. But it's interesting. It's at least they're they're learning what responsibility feels like and some of the chores that they have to get their siblings to do are things like wiping down the table and putting dishes in the dishwasher, you know, just all that stuff.

When when the quarantine first started, I thought, oh my goodness, I am barely surviving with, you know, people eating two meals at home. Now we're going to have three meals and two snacks.

My kitchen is going to be constantly a mess. So we immediately made a chart of like after meal chores that would just rotate and putting away the food, and you know what I mean, all that stuff.

But we were finding we were reminding too much. So we created created a manager system. So that's that's what's working for us. Most of the time the table gets washed.

Most of the time the floor is swept. Right now the kitchen's a huge mess, but we just went on vacation, so we disrupted all the good routines that we had that we had set down.

But I think just, you know, being flexible and trying different things, but realizing that your your kids can handle it and if they can't, they fail and they learn from failure better than anything else.

And what I'm realizing as you're talking about this, Katie, is just how important that relationship is. That connection with your kids, if you're going to have them, live up to a higher level of expectations there, there is a way to do it that that is disconnected.

Right. And it's it's it's a it would be an approach where it's like, I don't I don't want to have to do this for you. I don't want to have to take care of you.

So I'm expecting you to take care of yourself. That's not what we're talking about, right? We're talking about teaching our kids life skills. And when we have that connection with them, where we're speaking into I.

I see this in you, I see greatness in you. I see this potential in you. Let me show you how to do this. And like you let me mentor you with this. It's a very different feeling.

And it's this is the way in which they're really going to be able to step into this with a positive, feeling with, with, yeah, and maintain a positive relationship with us rather than it becoming this battle because they're feeling like, yeah, we just don't want to do it.

We just don't want to take care of them. It's it's it can look the same at the end, but the approach is really where, where it's going to turn into something that is nourishing and and invigorating, rather than something that ends up being a negative, a negative factor in their life.

Yeah. And so in gratitude, too, I mean, we think our kids are helping out. I think we talk a lot about balance of responsibility. You know, mom and dad have to work so we can buy this food and you guys can put away the food at the end of the meal, you know, and just how it all works.

And also fun, fun little insight into when kids do have chores. It's a great gift to them. Now if I do one of their chores right. So my kids have always packed their lunches.

And so anytime that I, you know, especially if a kid has like a really busy evening or maybe they just forgot, but I know that it wasn't, you know, malicious or intentional or whatever, I'll say, hey, dude, you know, I packed your lunch for you or just I made sure we always have, like, homemade yogurt with frozen fruit.

I say, oh, I was making yogurts for the little guys. I made one for you. You know, and my teenager would be like, oh, thanks. How often does that happen?

Yeah. No, it does a lot more gratitude. Yeah. Sets up a lot of good good back and forth gratitude in both directions. And then I know that it's all part of being part of a family.

And I remember when I had my son and I was working with him and setting the expectation that he was going to manage something and he was going to be responsible for it and responsible for knowing when to do it.

Like having that reminder for himself that at this time I'm going to do this. And even I remember working with a mom named Sephora and her daughter, and she was working with her on packing her lunch for school.

And inevitably, there are days where it doesn't go well, right? And something happens and she doesn't have time to pack her lunch. Or my son, you know, didn't have that reminder and forgot.

And it's those teaching moments where then we can come and we can connect with them and, and mentor them at that point. And rather than shaming them, rather than beating them up rather than criticizing them.

Right, they these are the teaching moments. And this is where it really is not being lazy at all. It's it's mentoring them in those moments of, hey, yeah, this is this is what happens.

This is what can happen. This has happened to me a million times, and this is what I've done in order to set these reminders in my life. How can we set this reminder in in your life?

How can we, what would you need in order to have this reminder of, hey, you got to be done by this with this time, because you've still got to allow for this time to pack your lunch.

And you don't you don't want to go to school without your lunch. So it's that mentorship that really allows it to flourish. When we are teaching our kids these life skills, when when we don't have those expectations and so aren't teaching them the life skills, we miss out on a lot of the mentorship that we can provide our kids, that then they can feel lost later on in life because they didn't get that mentorship.

And just like it's easier, it's going to be easier for us to pick up our kids laundry and for us to make their lunches for them. At first, it's also easier to solve their problems for them.

You know, and just give them the answer. And so I often have to, like, catch myself when they're asking for help, you know, and say, well, what do you think?

And I have a phrase I use a lot, like, how can you solve your problem? I would love to hear a couple ideas. Let's talk this through. And we're very explicit about failure is good.

The Kitchen as a Classroom for Life

Well, what can we learn from this failure to the point where my eight year old, not too long ago, grabbed my five year old, put his arm around and pulled him around the corner, and he goes, okay, buddy, you need to stop asking that question.

I don't want you to learn from failure today. Yeah, but it's like it's like, okay, I don't have to hear that question for the 13th time. That worked out.

Yeah that's interesting. And I did not know I did not know that about you Katie. But that's another just alignment that we have in, in our programs. Because in my program the intentional parenting for attachment, that's exactly what I teach my parents to is if there's a question that they're asking that, that they could figure out themselves or take that time to be present with them while they figure that out themselves, rather than just giving them the answer.

Because we're not providing that mentorship, that leadership and modeling how to solve problems. And it can be hard. I've got one who will just dig in the heels and and be like, just tell me.

And I'm like, oh, I really want to, because I have three ideas and we can just get this done. But I'm not going to do it because I know you are capable and I'm starting to get frustrated.

You know what I mean? I'm like, so it's definitely not easy, but absolutely worth it when you can raise competent, healthy, independent adults. It is.

And and I love again just the look on their face when we've allowed them that space to grow and to reach a new level that they didn't know they were capable of.

And when they're actually able to accomplish something new, figure out something new on their own with our mentorship and our presence beside them, supporting them, you can see how much that means to them, how much that integrates into their mood and to their outlook on life in themselves, how they see themselves.

And that's really where like for for moms, right. Like that. Those are moments where, where we live for those where we can really see the difference that we're making in our kids and raising them to be competent, healthy, loving people.

Yeah. You know, in reinventing the kids meal as one that a kid cooks can, sometimes it it gives kids, you know, something that's theirs can really change the whole dynamic in the family.

I know one of our summer campers, Seth, is 14 year old, and he shared with his mom for the first time. He wants to open a Ninja warrior course attached to a healthy food restaurant and be a chef.

She was like, oh, I don't I don't even know that. How cool is that? You know? So he's like, integrated that into his being and into his future. And another mom, her kids are eight and five, two boys and eight year olds that super strong willed, right?

So the squeaky wheel gets the grease, he gets more attention because he cries for it. And she noticed that when they all started cooking together, the five year old began to sort of come out of his shell and kind of blossom and bloom, and he had something that was his.

He had these skills. He had learned that were his, and she could almost see that sort of pecking order shift a little bit in the family or the strong willed child, you know, the five year old finally had something that was his own that he was getting that positive attention for.

So it's just beautiful the way that can happen. It is. Well, Katie, thank you. Thank you for joining us today. I again, I just honor your work that you're doing with families and and the skills that you're bringing.

But just just the hope and the the increase in expectations and life skills and that relationship that you're helping families build. Yeah, it's you know, it's all about getting kids in the kitchen.

I think that's going to change the foundations for their mental health as they grow into adults, their physical health and even their their relationships.

So it's it's everything that the kitchen is the best educational environment we have access to. It really is the kitchen is the best classroom. Good. Well I'm your host doctor Amy thank you so much for joining us today.

We will have the link for Katie's programs in the show notes so that you can look at that. I really encourage you to do that. She's doing some amazing work with families.

And together let's find that next level of health and aliveness.