Healthy Kids, Happy Kids: Dr. Elisa Song, Integrative Pediatrician, joins Dr. Paula Kruppstadt to Discuss Her New book and Foundation Principles for Families with Children Transcript

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Podcast Introduction and Guest Background

Your genes hold the answers to your family's overall health. I'm Dr. Paula Kruppstadt and on the Get to the Root with Hope for Healing podcast, I sit down with experts in genetics, functional medicine, and family care to explore what's really going on beneath the surface so you can stop guessing and start healing.

From personalized insights to practical tools, we bring you whole family wellness that starts at the root. Welcome to the Get to The Root podcast with Dr.

Paula Kruppstein and today I have the pleasure of interviewing Dr Alisa Song. She is a Stanford NYU UCSF-trained integrative pediatrician and pediatric functional medicine expert and most importantly, a mother to two thriving children.

She's a national bestselling author of Healthy Kids, Happy Kids and the visionary founder of healthy kids, happy kids. The go-to resource for families and practitioners seeking trusted evidence-based root cause solutions for children She's also been featured in hundreds of top podcasts, and I'm most excited about the fact that Dr.

Song is the chief medical officer of Tiny Health, which is leading the way in gold standard microbiome testing for kids and adults. Dr. Song is also the chair of A4M, the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicines, Pediatric Education, and has taught parents and practitioners around the world on integrative pediatric topics for leading educational organizations.

All right. Well, Dr. Song, may I call you Elisa? Of course. Yes, please do. Thank you so much for joining us today. I'm really grateful for your time and we can kind of geek out on integrative and functional pediatrics.

That's my favorite topic. Yay. Okay. well, I wanted to just kind set the groundwork a little bit. Then, you know, one of the things I appreciated about you is that I'm a pediatrician too, I graduated from med school in 1990. I've got a little bit more time on you, but I didn't really find functional medicine and opened my own practice about 11 years ago.

And we have watched just generations, just whole generation of children become chronically ill. And back in 2005, the New England Journal of Medicine predicted for the first time in history that our kids were expected to have shorter lifespans than us, their parents.

Now here we are 21 years later when nearly one in two kids has a chronic condition. And so, you know, the time to really revolutionize the future of children's health with the pediatric integrative and functional approach is now.

All right. Well, I'm just going to jump on in and we're going talk about why a child's gut microbiome holds the key for lifelong resilience. Would you tell us how did your journey lead you to integrated pediatrics and stepping outside the conventional pediatric box to focus on holistic wellness for kids?

So I actually initially had not intended to go into pediatrics. I knew that I wanted to work with children and children's advocacy was very important to me.

And I didn't know what that meant. In college, I was actually a political science major and I thought that i was going to be a children rights civil rights lawyer

i actually was in Washington DC for two summers with the Children's Defense Fund lobbying for Medicare and Medicaid rights to lower the poverty level at which families would be eligible for services and also helping to support teenage pregnancy education programs.

From Advocacy to Integrative Pediatrics

Now, this was back in, I guess, the late 80s, it was. And I thought that was my path, and I even took the LSATs and got some law school applications. And then I realized I wouldn't actually be working with children if I went this route.

I could be doing a lot of good for kids, but as we all know now, politics is not what I though it was going to be in terms of being able to make actionable, quick changes for our kids.

So I decided I would go into medical school. And it was right around that time, I was a Stanford undergrad, that I saw a flyer. This was 1989 for a conference of the American Holistic Medical Association.

And back then, the word holistic medicine wasn't even really a thing. It was called alternative medicine. So I brought myself to the Santa Clara Convention Center as a junior and was completely hooked.

I heard from people who were just starting to get known, like Andrew Weil, and Joan Borosenko was there talking about what was called mind-body medicine.

And I knew that that was my path. So I actually, from there, when I applied to med school, initially thinking that I would actually become a naturopathic doctor.

I wasn't, nobody back then, mind you, this is now almost, what, 40 years, is it 40 1989, 1989. Yeah. Oh my gosh. I know. But yeah, I mean, this was quite a while ago.

You know, naturopathy was really not that well known, at least in my circle and my family. And so I ended up going the medical school route. desire for more root cause approaches, more holistic, integrative approach has really informed my entire medical school residency and career paths.

I really, I would not practice in any other way. And I feel fortunate that this is always how I've practiced. Yeah, that's beautiful. The other thing is where you were on the West Coast had a lot more things available.

I mean, I was the first integrative functional or functional pediatrician in the Houston area and people are like scratching their heads and I'm I kind of have coast jealousy because of all you have available.

Oh, go ahead. I think that we are at an inflection point where parents are demanding this, right? And more and more practitioners and pediatricians are interested you know, opening their minds, not as many as I would like, but it's coming.

And if we look back, it, way more than it was when you and I were starting. So I'm grateful that this is being recognized as really the path that we need to take for kids.

You know, it's interesting when interacting with other pediatricians or physicians or nurse practitioners that have been in the traditional allopathic milieu of medicine, It's not until their own child or their health suffers that they start looking at other things.

And it is like when the need is there, then their heart and their mind are open to another approach. I'm sure you've found that too. You know, I was fortunate, knock on wood, that I did not have a family member or myself needing any particular care where conventional medicine didn't have all the answers.

But that is the story for most. And I'm hoping that we can reach out to the younger and younger aspirational pediatricians and family practice doctors who are more interested from the beginning.

So that will be That is the legacy that I really hope to leave. Yes. We've had some medical students in resident shadow and it's, I'm like, don't go do that fellowship.

Come and join us so we can train you so you don' get any ideas in your head that we have to undo. Okay. Now in you book, you discuss a concept you call whole child resilience.

So what do you mean by that? So my practice when I first started it was called Whole Child Wellness, and since it's morphed and we're now Whole Family Wellness.

But this idea of wellness is a bit static. It's sort of this one point in time, are you well or not well? that's not really how we want to think about our health.

And so what we really want recognize is building those foundations of health for our kids and for ourselves is really building a resilient foundation so that whenever the inevitable viral illness or injury or psychological stressor comes our way, that we trust that this child's body and mind and immune system have the ability to deal with whatever is occurring in the moment and be able to bounce back.

And in an ideal world, they would bounce not just to their baseline, but at a stronger level, even more prepared to dealing with the next stressor. And so, you know, what I wanted parents to get away from was this idea that a healthy well child means that they never get sick and they ever get stressed and never any injuries, right?

We don't want any dumps of all of these stressors at once, but we have to recognize that just like your muscles cannot get strong without a little bit of stress on them, Same thing happens with our brain and our mental health and in our immune systems and, you know, even at a cellular level.

Whole Child Resilience and Root Cause Wellness

And so this idea that we can build that foundation, trust that our kids can manage and bounce back quickly and completely and even stronger for the next time is what I really wanted to convey with that term, whole child resilience.

That's excellent. One thing that we do here at the practice, because it's what helped me get well and allowed our family to really pivot was precision genetics.

Now we know about the epigenetic, but then there's some things that are hardwired. There's rate limiting steps and it is the symphony of those bodies, how we support this, the Symphony and move along.

Now, what should every parent, practitioner, and our kids know about developing or a children's developing gut microbiomes and its influence on their health and well-being?

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That's the premier and proprietary genetic panel that Fogran has allowed us to create. So, my book, Healthy Kids, Happy Kids really is about teaching children and parents and practitioners why your microbiome lays that foundation for long-term future health, lifelong health.

Now, for children especially, where everything is exploding and developing and really coming from a relatively clean slate, their microbiome does hold that key for how that trajectory moves along in life.

The state of your child's microbiomes from birth, shortly after birth influences their immune development and influences brain and mental health development.

is from the start and how it is for practitioners and parents to understand this.

From the fertility doctor and the OB-GYN to the neonatologist and pediatrician, it's not well enough known and taught in training. So one study, this was now from 2016, so 10 years ago, it was a study of nearly 800,000 babies.

And it's military studies, they can look at these records and identify babies who had received either antibiotics or antacid medications in the first six months of life.

And what they found were those babies that received these interventions had a significantly increased risk of virtually every single allergic disease by the time they were four years of age.

That included eczema, asthma, hay fever, hives, anaphylactic food allergies. Now, I mean, you and I have been doing this long enough that when we were in training, anaphylactic food allergies was really rare.

It was rare to write an EpiPen prescription. And fast forward to now, we have one in 13 children today with anafylactic life-threatening food And we can trace that back to the shift in their early microbiomes, especially with this loss of a very important species in babies, bifidobacteria for the audience, where we know that babies are losing their bipidibacterium.

From a study from 2025 last year, the Baby Biome Project, that found that both C-section and vaginally birthed, it didn't matter, about three quarters of babies born were deficient in bifidobacteria, and about one in four had no biffidibacterium.

And so when we're thinking how do we prevent or manage a child's eczema, asthma, food allergies, the key is really to start from the very beginning. And another study that was a study of 1 million births, this was in, it was Denmark, I believe, can't remember if it's Denmark or Finland, but 1,000,00 birth and looked again at antibiotic exposure in those early years of life and subsequent risk of developing mental health concerns.

Why the Gut Microbiome Shapes Lifelong Health

And this study found that antibiotic use in these early-years, infancy and toddlerhood, significantly increased the risk in developing health mental concerns by up to 50% by the time they were older kids and teenagers.

And this included behavioral concerns, sleep problems, ADHD, anxiety. How rampant are those nowadays? And the younger the exposure, the higher the risks.

It's not to make anyone feel guilty because I know when I first read this and I thought gosh, both my babies had antibiotics when they were under five weeks of age.

It's not to say that we shouldn't go back and feel guilty about that. As moms, it's really hard not too, right? But whatever health concern is going on with your child, If we know that the foundation is their microbiome, then we that if they have an immune system problem, or if have a mental health concern, even if their poops look perfect and they don't seem to have any, quote, gut problems, those immune problems and those mental-health problems are gut microbiomes symptoms.

And so now we to look. I just want every practitioner to understand that so that, you know, if you do give their patients as a prescribing physician antibiotics that you do so judiciously and also help parents know and kids know how to restore their microbiome after those antibiotics.

Yeah, you know, I cringe when we do need to use the antibiotics because I'm like, we're going to have to be rebuilding the gut. We're gonna need be using Saccharomyces boulardii and other things.

But I want to segue just a little bit. What are the six questions that a parent should ask the pediatrician when they're getting ready to prescribe antibiotics?

Well, I'll say the first question. And I have a whole chapter in my book on what every parent and practitioner needs to understand about antibiotics. It's that important.

Because as you said, you know now as an integrative functional medicine pediatrician, the downstream harms that antibiotic, even just one round of antibiotics, could trigger.

Right? And so, I mean, you and I, like we are in this position where we only want to prescribe antibiotics when absolutely necessary. And then when it's absolutely necessarily, we have the parents understand it is necessary, finish the course, and let's restore the microbiome.

Right. But in some studies, pediatric studies they found that up to 70% of antibiotic prescriptions written for children were inappropriately prescribed.

So, for viral illnesses, which are the most common illness in children, or perhaps a broader spectrum than kids really needed. The number one question I want every parent to ask when they're a practitioner, whether it's an urgent care practitioner or whether its your primary care doctor.

When they prescribe an antibiotic, the number-one question to asked is, hey, doc, is this prescription really necessary? Now, it sounds really simplistic, but if you imagine, you know, back to the days when we had busy ER shifts, and I remember working at an urgent care temporarily while I was trying to make money, before I started the practice, I mean, Gosh, I mean, it's like 40 patients, you know, in like a three hour shift.

And I remember one shift I kept seeing the charts piling up on the door and I did not have time to go to the bathroom to get a glass of water to eat anything.

I literally almost developed a bladder infection that night. It was awful. If you imagine a pediatrician in that situation, Sad to say, but the easiest thing to do is to write that prescription, right?

And there are parents who come in, who their main objective from that urgent care or ER visit is get a prescription. Now, people listening to this podcast, that's not you, Right?

Right. But if you simply pause and ask the prescribing practitioner, Is this really necessary? It helps them to pause and know that you are not the parent that just wants a prescription for an antibiotic.

You're the parents that will take it if it's necessary but wants to be more thoughtful and judicious. And that alone can open that conversation. Because we know, for instance, with ear infections, earaches are the number one reason for a visit to the pediatrician's office, that for the vast majority of children, a watchful waiting approach, you know waiting 48, 72 hours before starting the antibiotic is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

It's not always followed by conventional pediatricians. And one study found that physicians were nearly two times as likely to prescribe an antibiotic, even when they knew that that antibiotic was likely not appropriate and that it was not going to help.

When they thought that the patient wanted one. Yeah. And it's just a nature of our very broken health care system, right? Yes. So this is something that for parents, now you understand the downstream effects of the antibiotics and you can be a little bit more, be more informed advocate for your child, that's very important.

I'm glad you unpacked that. Just last week, I saw a new little patient with autism. And when I did the exam, there was some fluid behind one of the ears.

But we drew a CPC the same day. We also do a therapy here called ozone insufflations. Yeah. That's how we treat our ear infections most of time. The next day, mom wrote back and said, well, so-and-so is vomiting and has a fever.

the CBC had populated and I was able to say, and of course, when we looked at it, it looked, I thought it was viral. I

just said, well, just keep coming back.

Let's do three ozone insufflations, let's ride this out and here's a little something for nausea, but ride us out. We don't want to have poor use of antibiotics and sure enough, you know, the third day rolled around.

She said, things are so much better. I just had to be careful that I don't disclose anything else because they'll know who they are. Well, and here's the thing.

You and I, we use these more integrative approaches and use homeopathy and herbal medicines. And I remember in that time when I was moonlighting in urgent care, It was crazy how many antibiotic prescriptions I wrote.

And since starting my own practice and incorporating garlic ear drops, homeopathy, acupressure points, essential oils, in the last 20 plus years, I mean, 22 years of my practice, i can literally count on the fingers of both hands at times I've had to write antibiotic descriptions for ear infections.

And that is a stunning difference between the conventional pediatric practice. So that's where I want parents to learn different tools and have your home toolkit, because there's so much that parents can really understand to empower themselves when their kids feel sick, so that they, first of all, don't feel like they're doing nothing and just watching their kid suffer, right?

And second of, have the confidence that what they are doing actually can work.

Antibiotics, Ear Infections, and Microbiome Repair

And that's why in the last part of my book, part four, I go through the top 25 childhood conditions, both acute and chronic, including ear infections or fevers or colds and flus.

instruct parents on my integrative approach. Everyone, every practitioner has a unique approach, but my approach that I've found over the years includes, incorporates herbal medicines and homeopathy quite a bit and acupressure points.

And so if you have that impairment and that confidence, it's so much easier than to say, you know what, I think I'll wait on the antibiotics. The other really important thing that i wanted for parents is, especially for in a more integrative approach.

It can be a little daunting, and you just want to be confident that you're doing the right things for your kids, that your doing enough. So I also, for each condition, write when you should call your doctor, because I think that's important too.

You know, it's not to say that try all these quote natural approaches and completely forget about your pediatrician who's practicing more conventionally, there is a time and a place for antibiotics.

It's just if you have those tools, you'll know that when you do use antibiotics, it's appropriate for your kids. Yes, yeah that's a huge resource for parents to have.

I know we have like our, I kind of have, if I could do it all over again I would learn acupuncture too and I took the CEDH homeopathy course and just so many amazing tools that are available that we were never taught conventionally.

Now, Alisa, what are some of the most significant factors right now that disrupt our children's microbiomes today? You alluded to a little bit of that.

Yeah. And this is so important for kids and for children to understand because our life right is filled with microbiome disruptors. That is just the fact of it.

In my book, I call them microbiom mischief makers. But we need to understand our world. Everything that we're exposed to can disrupt our gut microbiome.

And if we understand what factors disrupt or gut micro biome, we can take steps to reduce that exposure, to reduced our burning. We can't make it zero.

and still live in this modern world, but we can reduce it. So the first is, it's not just antibiotics or antacid medications that I mentioned before. Now, just for basic foundations for listeners, if they're not sure why antibiotics and ant-acids medications are such microbiome disruptors, antibiotics in particular can sometimes kill beneficial bacteria, often kill beneficially bacteria right along with the pathogenic bacteria.

And in some cases, they actually preserve some pathogenic bacteria, which is why we sometimes will see C. diff infections, right? So those antibodies don't touch the bad things that we want them to touch.

And antacid medications, the alter the pH balance in your gut. In our microbes, just like we as humans, we have a very narrow pH that like to survive in.

So altering that can completely shift which bacteria or parasites or viruses or fungi actually want to live in your gut. But what people don't understand is that there actually are a whole list of other medications that in the literature have been shown to disrupt the microbiome as much as antibiotics.

And that includes some antihistamines, which right now, as we are interviewing, it's allergy season. And so just being mindful, even if your child needs Zyrtec or some antihistamine, you still need to be mindful of building a resilient gut microbiome, SSRI medications, anti-anxiety medications.

Birth control pills, steroids. If you think about our teenagers now, especially our teenage girls are facing this crisis of adolescent anxiety and suicidal ideation and even attempts.

how many of them are on an SSRI for their anxiety or depression and they're on the birth control pill, right, which further depletes their gut microbiome and then maybe they are low dose doxycycline for the their acne.

And so they have all of these factors and if we don't recognize, oh my gosh, maybe these medications are necessary temporarily But if we don't get at the root cause, and one of them is the disruptive gut microbiome, these medications further disrupt the gut micro biome.

And it's no wonder that eventually these medication stop working for our kids. It's not wonder for the birth control pill in our youth, 15 to 24 years of age, they are the age group with the highest risk of suicidal ideation and attempts after starting the birth control pill.

And that risk lasts for up to two years. We know that SSRI medications for children, boys and girls, increase. There's a black box warning on the increased risk of suicidality.

We have to be mindful. It is not just about throwing medications and trying to put Band-Aids on their symptoms. it is urgent that we understand what's going on under the surface, that the mind is no disconnected from the gut or the immune system.

And so really understanding how intertwined those are is key. We also have hormone disruptors, you know, these endocrine disrupting chemicals like PFASs, phthalates, parabens.

bisphenol A. A lot of people know them as hormone disruptors. Well, they disrupt way more than our hormones. In the literature for kids, we know that it can affect cognitive development.

It can effect mood, it affect their immune system, increasing the risk for inflammatory diseases and autoimmune diseases, and even cardiometabolic diseases.

How does it do that if it just disrupts your hormones? There's one paper that actually calls to change the naming and identify these as microbiome disrupting chemicals.

That would be excellent if they changed the name. Because that explains the far-reaching ripple effect that these quote hormone disruptors have on virtually every single organ system in our body.

And then, you know, beyond medications and environmental toxins, there's lifestyle stress. I mean, psychological stress, lack of sleep, not moving your body, a lack hydration, all of those can disrupt our gut microbiomes.

And so the most important thing for me is to first shine the light on this for parents and kids, understand where they actually have the power themselves to move the needle, right?

Because you have power over how you live and move and eat. and so then empower kids to live as microbiome-centric a diet and lifestyle so that whenever they get exposed to the inevitable microbiom disruptor, which will happen every day, pretty much, that their microbiomes are also resilient, because a resilient child requires a I love that.

You know, you devote an entire chapter to the vagus nerve. And it's interesting, we have a little breathing chart part, all the different types and soft belly and then the little breath whistle.

and taking a little bit of time in the exam room to teach kids how to breathe. But can you tell us why optimizing kids' vagus nerve is so essential for optimizing their microbiomes?

We're going to have people listening to this who don't know that the vagous nerve the only nerve that innervates the entire GI tract.

Microbiome Disruptors in Medications and Environment

So take it away. Well, the vagus nerve for listeners who aren't aware is that it's the longest nerve in our body. The Latin root for vagis is the same root as vagabond, meaning it is our wandering nerve.

it wanders from our brain all the way through our body. And not only does it innervate, you know, touch our entire GI tract, but it also touches and controls most of our internal organs, like our heart, right?

And our lungs. It's a two-way, information highway. So your brain communicates with your gut through the vagus nerve, and your guts communicate with the brain through your vagal nerve.

What many people don't recognize is that 80 to 90 percent of that communication occurs from your gut to your brain, right? So the importance of the gut microbiome, really key because what's happening in the got microbiomes, all that signaling, whatever is unhappy in that gut micro biome will be then conducted up to the brain.

And the state of your got microbiome can influence your mood and your behavior for children and adults affect their cognitive functioning. And the other thing that is so important is when we're thinking about the vagus nerve, a lot of people think it's that nerve that helps you to feel calm and relaxed.

Which yes, it's true. And yet your vagus nerve also controls your inflammatory response in your body, right? And it controls, your immune system functioning peripherally and can affect chronic inflammation and autoimmune risks.

how your vagus nerve functions also impacts your cardiometabolic health and your blood sugar regulation and so many other factors that really affect our health.

And we know that one measure for your vegas nerve function is called heart rate variability. Some people will track that with, you know, if you have an aura ring like I do or your Apple watch or whoop band will check this.

Well, why are so many people tracking heart rate variability? Well, heart rate variability is a measure of how well

your vagus nerve is functioning, something called vagal tone.

It is also one of the best predictors for current and future health. And so when we think about strengthening our vagous nerve, I don't call it mind-body medicine anymore.

I call a vagis nerve exercises, vagas nerve work, because it's not just about feeling good and happy. That's a beneficial side effect. What I'm looking for is that your immune system is healthier, that you're gut microbiome is healthy, your heart and your hormones are healthier.

And then if you feel good along the way that's amazing. So when we do our vagus nerve work with all the breath work and I am so So glad that you're spending time in the office to teach kids this.

You can only do this in an integrated practice where you have more time to spend with patients, right? But regulating your vagus nerve, improving your heart rate variability has been found to improve children's gut microbiome diversity and function independent of diet.

So even if your children right now are picky or you are having struggles with getting them to eat more vegetables, That's okay. You can work on their vagus nerve first, and by working on the vagis nerve, first it helps the whole family regulate together, which is really important, right?

And then it help their microbiome shift to a healthier microbiomes. Your microbiom actually affects your taste preferences. So then, it's actually easier for your child's palate to say, okay, that little piece of whatever, kale on my plate wasn't so bad, right?

Yeah. So the vagus nerve is really key to supporting our overall microbiome health and overall mental health, immune health metabolic health. And then that is why it has a whole chapter.

The chapter is called Breathe. Now, there are other ways that we can engage our vagus nerve, like tapping, cognitive behavioral therapy can improve heart rate variability, walking in nature, but breathing, that's what we have to do every single day, every moment of the day and your breath is a direct way for you to control and regulate your vagus nerve.

In fact, you know, when we're in a heightened stress response state, we can't tell our heart rate to slow down. There's nothing we could do to do that.

We can tell are pupils to stop dilating, right? What we do, though, is slow our breath, take really deep diaphragmatic belly breaths, and that will then engage our vagus nerve, which then helps our heart rate to slow down, helps your pupils to not dilate, and gets us out of that fight or flight.

And so we have this power to manage our breath. And so if you can learn that, I feel like that is one of the things that should be a part of every well-child visit is learning how to regulate your breath.

You know, we are preparing to redo our well child templates. And I think we'll add that in to the kids, you know. So much of that time, when you walk into an exam room and you have a family that's been waiting to see you, that has a really sick child and the anxiety and stress of the mom and dad is just palpable and then just taking the time to set there with them and say, you know, I just want you to know that I've read everything that you have populated.

We're not recreating the wheel, but we're gonna try to meet you where you are. And it's almost like you can just feel the stress just go out. It's all about how we show up in the exam room.

Thanks for unpacking that, it is so important. This is the fun stuff out of your book. I love how you made everything fun and little kids remember things.

Funny thing, Alisa, that happened. We look at immune systems. I'm not anti-vaccine, I am pro-patient and pro immunization. So precision genetics is the foundation of what we do here.

And one little boy, I had told him, well, you can ground and explained that. Then his parents said, would you please tell him to wear shoes? Because he wouldn't wear his shoes because Dr.

K said I needed to touch the dirt and the earth.

The Vagus Nerve, Breathing, and Gut-Brain Health

But, they hear and they're so smart. It's all about and then it's like well mommy and daddy love you and you don't want to step in in doggy poo poo or whatever and so you need to listen to your parents too.

But you talk about the five things that create microbiome magic every day for whole gut resilience. Can you share some of your top tips for doing that?

So I wanted to make sure that everything in my book was grounded in science. So there's tons of references. In fact, we had to pull the references out and make it a whole separate PDF because it was so many.

And I know parents don't want to carry around, you know, it's a big enough book already. But also that it is doable and actionable and fun because otherwise you don' have lasting changes.

One of my main goals was to educate and empower kids too. So I have kids reading parts of the book with their parents. I've had teenagers and actually what's been so just warms my heart is I had college students read parts the of book and then when they come back, they'll tell me about how they're trying to eat in a way that supports their microbiome or even send me photos of food they make.

It does come And I also wanted to make your job as a parent easier. It is always easier when it doesn't come from you, right? I mean, even for my own kids, I'll say, just read that part of my book, because if it comes from me, it's a little different, Also, for practitioners, because if your patients read the book first, I've had so many practitioners say that now they don't have to explain all of the foundations of why the microbiome is so important, why we're doing the stool test, and why were talking about the gut.

They can just start right away into the plan, into a more, you know, precision personalized plan. And I love the marriage of a stool microbiomes test and genetics testing.

Because the genetics testing, when you understand your genetic variants and your SNPs, then you can fine-tune your potential. Yes. How do we optimize your health trajectory moving forward?

And then a gut microbiome test lets you know, well, what's happening right now? What are some of the inflammatory factors or the gut dysbiosis and things that we need to address so that, we can then have your genes actually work for you?

So it's an amazing marriage of The Two, and I'm so glad that you do that. Yeah, I have loved that because I'll put the stool study beside their genetics and go, you know, You don't have this enzyme.

Well, buccosal will transferase that attracts these healthy bacteria and this explains why there's not this or a family that's dealing with a water damage building and they have A lot of actinomycetes are endotoxin producers and their home testing has those.

And to look at their neurotropic factors, brain regeneration and what are the things that we can do to modulate those and glutathione. If they don't make glutothione that sets them up for the leaky gut to begin with.

I'm so glad you brought that up because That's the sponsor. That is what got me healthy, and genetics means so much. Okay, so let's get back to the five things.

So the Five Things from Microbiomagic, these are things that we do every single day. And so I wanted families to

you build that foundation of microbiomes resilience.

It is not about perfection, but it is about understanding what these five things are. And these 5 things each of them has a chapter, actually Nourish has two chapters.

So NOURISH, what we eat, is in two parts. Nourish part one is what microbiome champions do we really want to focus on in trying to get more of in our diet?

These microbiomes champions, again, memorable is key. So the three Fs, fiber, phytonutrients, which is a pH, but it sounds like an F, and fermented foods.

Okay, and I give clear tables on different options to choose from the fiber content of different foods. I have recipes to make fermented foods that are easy and delicious, like fermented blackberry lemonade.

Yes. So that you can get fermented food in a way that maybe traditional ferments are not favored just yet, but you could start the process. And then Nourish Part 2 is what microbiome mischief makers do we want to keep?

And so I talk about three main ones in our food. So FDA approved food additives, especially this category of addatives called emulsifiers, which keep your food together, sauces, protein bars, ice cream from becoming a goopy mess.

And yet they can directly trigger leaky gut and increase gut inflammation. We need to understand that. Now, part of and also added sugars and artificial sweeteners and glyphosate.

And I tell you exactly why so that when your kids push back and say, well, I don't think these are that bad for me. I feel fine. You can show them the science of what's going on in their gut when they eat these and, also, what is going in the brain.

Now part, of Nourish Part 2, that's really important. is how do we help our kids live in our modern world, go out to eat with their friends, have, quote, fun in a kid-friendly way that doesn't wreak havoc on their microbiomes and their brain health?

And so one of the most important steps to take away from part two is learning how to read food labels like a gut hero detective. And that's really important.

I let people know, parents, kids, practitioners, that the two most important life skills that I want kids to have before they leave your house are learning how to read food labels and learning to regulate their nervous systems.

If they have those two things down, so many other things are going to fall into place. Learning how do laundry, yes, they need to know how that can come, right?

Microbiome Magic: Nourish, Move, Hydrate, Sleep

Watering the plants, keeping them alive, I can't even do that, but yes that's a good skill to But those two skills are foundational. The other, there are five things for microbiome magic.

I put them in a wheel of whole gut resilience because a will always moves forward no matter which one you start with. And so for parents where nourish is hard and their kids, we have kids who are so sensory and they're eating the same, you know, box of mac and cheese and chicken nuggets.

At least from there, part two is important. Try to make the swap so that you're choosing the better for their gut and brain chicken nuggets and box of mac and cheese.

But then there's also breathe. We spoke about breathe, how to engage your vagus nerve. There's how we move, hydrate, and also because all of these can support our gut microbiome.

And so if your kids are really picky, then maybe start with the movement piece. Mindful movement every day can help support a healthier gut micro biome and there are little fun challenges that you can do in the book and different exercises to really make it memorable and doable for your whole family.

Yes, yes. I love how you've made it. You can join anywhere you want and progress not perfection and one lateral swap here and there. It's just where we meet people.

So how can we as parents and practitioners help support this movement to revolutionize the future of children's health and help kids thrive? in our modern, ultra-processed world.

Yeah. I mean, education is the first piece, right? Education without judgment. And it is really hard as a parent when you see your kids just gravitating towards all this junk.

There's a reason that's happening, because the food manufacturers have done everything they can to make that food as addictive as possible. So it's having compassion and empathy and then educating and empowering.

So not just telling your kids you have to do this because it is going to make your gut microbiome unhappy. It's educating kids, well, why does that matter?

Well, if they don't want as many breakouts on their skin, you start with the gut. If they want to be able to sit still in class better and not get in trouble, start it with a gut, and if you don t want get sick as often and miss so many parties, then you start with the gut.

So empowering them is really, really important. It's also voting with our dollars. I mean, making that conscious choice at the supermarket. And, you know, my family, I'm not going to say that we home cook everything from scratch because that's not the reality of my life and it's the not reality many, many families' lives.

You know I do go to Trader Joe's and shop at our local grocery store and buy packaged food and that makes life easier. But if you learn how to choose those foods that don't have the mono and diglycerides or the carrageenan or, you know, the sucralose or acetyl sulfate potassium.

You're voting with your dollars. you're showing that grocery store, okay, these are the things that maybe we don' t want to stock as much because there's less demand.

And then you' re showing the food industry that, yeah, parents and kids do want better for you foods. So that's really important. I also think working with your schools in any way possible.

More schools have school gardens or cooking classes where they're teaching kids how to cook and grow vegetables. And so being a part of that when kids know where their food is coming from, when they can touch the food and smell the foods and know what real food it is.

When they learn how cook, it makes it so much more likely that at least they are going to lick it and try it. That might be your first step, which is fine.

But studies have also shown that kids who learn how to cook also are more likely to eat vegetables as adults and feed vegetables to their children. So that is so important.

And whatever else you can do, whether, you know, I'm a big, from my roots down from when I wanted to go into law, advocate on a larger level. And so if you can, you know, if there are bills that come up in your state or federal bills, that promote healthier food choices, getting rid of, in California, we're on the way, a bill was passed to get rid, of ultra processed foods in school lunches.

So whatever you do, and if that's not for you, it's okay, but we start wherever we can. Yeah, I so appreciate that summary. It just echoes with who we are as a practice too.

So I want to thank you, Elisa, for allowing me to ask you all these questions today. And I wanna encourage our listening audience to get a copy of Healthy Kids, Happy Kids and start using this terminology with your kiddos.

I appreciated what you had to say specifically.

Empowering Families to Thrive in a Modern World

You know, for moms and dads and parents that are in survival mode, all they're doing, they are just hanging on to survive. And we always say no guilt, no shame.

We want to meet you where you are. I also want thank Tiny Health for the way that you've set the test up and allowing the practitioner to make the recommendations because they know maybe the precision genetics of the patient.

They know more about them, and it allows some freedom there to makes those recommendations. Yeah. Thank you so much. All right. Well, I want to encourage our listening audience to like and subscribe.

That's how we get the word out. And again, Dr. Elisa Song, thank you for joining me today. Thanks for joining us at Get to the Root with Hope for Healing.

If this episode helped you, follow and share it with someone who needs it and leave a review. It helps others find us too. For a free consultation, visit our website at gettotheroot.com with a number two and schedule a welcome call.

We'll see you soon.