Raising Healthy Kids with Food as Medicine | Ali Miller on Whole Foods, Protein & Picky Eaters Transcript

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Opening Scripture and Podcast Introduction

So I have a nine year old and, you know, in our household, we have Romans 12 two on the mantel of our household. We wrote scripture throughout our household as we were building it.

So each room has a different devoted Scripture verse that, you know, Romans 12 two is kind of how we anchor our family. And the concept of that, I think, really explains how we look at our family in this world, but not of this world.

Right? We're not trying to conform to the secular norm. We're trying to be different and serve God's will. So you know that Scripture as it reads, is do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be renewing by the transformation of your mind.

Hi everyone. Welcome back to the Integrative Health Podcast with Doctor Jen. Today we're going to be talking all about nutrition and how it is important to our development as kids and adults.

Allie Miller is a registered dietitian, certified Diabetes educator, functional medicine nutritionist, mama wife, and traditional foods enthusiast. Allie has a natural apothic background and a contagious passion for having nutrients and food as a foundation of treatment protocols and programs.

She's the author of Naturally Nourished the Anti-anxiety Anxiety Diet, The Anti-anxiety Diet Cookbook, and the coauthor of Naturally Nourished Kids. Ali's Food as Medicine message has influenced millions through the medical community and media, with television, print and her award winning podcast nationally, Nourish.

Watch Ali in action for bite sized nutrition and functional medicine info on her Naturally Nourish YouTube channel. Ali is also the owner and head Functional Medicine practitioner of Naturally Nourish Clinic since 2012.

She created the Naturally Nourish Supplement line over a decade ago, featuring over 40 formulas that are safe, pure and effective.

Why Whole Foods Matter for Kids

And you can reach her more at her website and Instagram that will link for you guys. So welcome Ali. You're so excited to talk to you today. Yes, I think it'll be a great conversation.

Yeah. And and this is something that is this is a hard topic. Not everyone wants to talk about nutrition because then it means you you need to do better when you know better, right?

Have you found that a lot? Oh, yeah. It's it's a continuum that we're all on every day. Right? We're constantly re evolving. And one of my favorite mantras that I say is doctrine creates disconnect in the world of diet.

And when we identify ourselves by a label of a particular type of diet, maybe it's paleo, maybe it's keto, maybe it's vegetarian. Often that type of buy in can dissociate ourselves from the feedback of what our body actually needs, which can ebb and flow with season.

As long as we're starting with the foundation of whole real Foods. Yes. And I think you saw that right there, real whole foods, because now we don't only have processed food, we have ultra processed foods.

What do you think about that? Like, yeah. So I you know, when we're navigating this, I think again, it's okay. I love that opening of like when we know better, we do better.

And you know, as parents are listening to today's episode, I always like to present in a space of empowerment and not in a space of shame or in a space of, having other people feel less or like they're doing something harmful or wrong because the end of the day, every parent wants their child to thrive.

Unfortunately, the food marketers very early in the mid 80s discovered that children are a captivated audience, and the manufacturers of ultra processed foods have been paying for buying power from parents through children.

As a vehicle. And this now has us set up with 1 in 5 kiddos dealing with a metabolic disease. Although 20% of kids are dealing with a learning disorder or mental illness.

We're seeing type two diabetes as a diagnosis as early as age four now in America, which again in my career as a certified diabetes educator was redefined from adult onset diabetes to type two diabetes because adult onset diabetes meant it was a lifestyle condition.

And unfortunately, we're just not setting up children for success. Now that 70 plus percent of Americans kids are eating ultra processed foods as the majority of their diet.

Right, absolutely. Let's start at the beginning. Babies led weaning. And this is something that I did, you know, 14 years ago. And people thought it was a little weird.

And and I think that we're starting to make it more normalized, but still like people are still hesitant to this. So how how do you approach parents, like with explaining baby led weaning?

Because the name kind of is not what it is. The name is interesting. Yeah, sure. And I mean, before really I go into that, I think it's important that the whole premise of my approach to nourishment is comes down to blood sugar balance.

Baby-Led Weaning and Blood Sugar Balance

And so when we're talking about savory start and baby led weaning, we're talking about developing a palate that is open to bitter, is open to complex flavor, like the sulfur containing compounds in our cruciferous vegetables which aid in detoxification, or the more maybe gamey flavors of a organ blend in meat.

When we start babies in processed cereals as their first foods as often rice, cereal and or instant oatmeal. Essentially, these are ultra refined, very processed, very devoid of nutrient.

In fact, they're all synthetically re enriched, which is right there, a sign that the manufacturer isn't providing whole real food. And so it's pretty much a dead ultra processed, refined, high glycemic food that has a very bland and or sweet taste on the palate.

So we're right away wiring our children to crave carbs, and we're setting them up for insulin, a genic response to high glycemic foods. And so, right away, when we're talking about a blood sugar roller coaster, this is what many kids are on.

Many adults are on a blood sugar roller coaster. If you've ever been hangry. You know, hungry and angry. You've had a blood sugar drop. And so that's that down part of the blood sugar roller coaster, which is usually refractory following a peak.

And unfortunately, when we're starting kids and priming their palates for bland or sweet and they're eating naked carbs or refined processed carbs without ample protein or fat, they're just on this willy nilly blood sugar roller coaster, setting them up for issues with metabolic health, mental health, immune issues.

And it even goes on beyond that. So baby led weaning provides the autonomy back to the child, which is always important as we phase from baby all the way through toddler through adolescent, through teens, all kids, even babies that aren't communicative verbally yet, all children, all people want to be seen, heard and understood.

And baby led weaning provides the early opportunity for autonomy or ownership with the diet. You present the foods to the baby and the baby using pincer grip.

Working nice fine motor skills which we don't get from being spoon fed, especially distracted, spoon fed, forced like we often see mothers do. Like cleaning up that oatmeal.

Others scroll in their cell phone and just kind of shoving the food in that baby's mouth. Baby gets to choose when and how much to eat. Baby is creating more satiety response with that baby led weaning process.

And again, a willingness to try more savory flavors and more nutrient dense whole foods. So with my Stella, her first food was avocado. Following avocado, we did wild salmon and then squished, smashed blueberries and extended from there.

She was never given a naked car, but she was having blueberries. There was always a protein or a fat on the plate. And that sets her up for more speed bump glucose variability versus those spikes followed by those crashes.

Yeah. And babies led weaning. They it is great because they get to choose. They put it in their mouth. They work with different textures. It's almost like play for them.

And it's really fun to see. So when parents for me, my kids, I feel like that went well. And then when they saw what their older siblings were eating, it became harder.

Or their classmates like how do you navigate that? Like, what do you tell parents to like to do when there's other influences? And it's not just you, you know, this is what you're eating.

How do they navigate that? So I have a nine year old and, you know, in our household, we have Romans 12 two on the mantel of our household. We wrote scripture throughout our household as we were building it.

So each room has a different devoted Scripture verse that, you know, Romans 12 two is kind of how we anchor our family. And the concept of that, I think, really explains how we look at our family in this world, but not of this world.

Right? We're not trying to conform to the secular norm. We're trying to be different and serve God's will. So you know that Scripture as it reads, is do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be renewing by the transformation of your mind.

And so when you know better, you do better, right? So us having this principle approach and Stella, which, yes, she has already started to be fashioned by the real world, through pressure at dance competitions or through peers in the cafeteria, etc..

It's just another way for me as her mother, for her. And I in our relationship, for us, in our spiritual journey here on earth to be different, and to shine our light in a space that feels again encouraged and positive versus judgmental and shame.

So as an example, she just changed schools. And, last week was her first two days of school. And she said, hey, mom, the girls were asking me why I don't eat in the cafeteria.

And she said, and I thought about it. And instead of telling them why, I don't eat in the cafeteria because that might come off judgmental, or they might feel they might have their feelings hurt.

We're really working on the word discernment in our household. But, you know, she said, I said instead that my mom's a dietitian, and she loves making everything from scratch.

So it brings my mom great joy to provide me nourishment. And that's kind of her big deal. So that way, for her to explain it is different than my mom says, don't eat chemical, storm, you know?

Yeah. Or processed products that. Oh, these aren't real foods. And that's why we don't eat it. And that's. That is the truth. We don't define the cafeteria offerings as nourishment.

We define them as ultra processed products. Yet again, the way that we communicate to our peers, to others is, is hopefully in a positive light that others are curious to seek out versus coming down, shaming and creating fear mongering.

And I have found, you know, we used to early on offer an alternative birthday treat.

Handling Peer Pressure and Family Food Values

And even in third grade she was like, mom, I'm good. I don't need you to make me an avocado brownie every time a kid has a birthday. She's kind of like, I got food.

And she was at a dance party, and they offered her a cookie. Like one of those cookies from the mall with, like, the, frosting on top. And. And the teacher came out and said, oh, Mr.

Miller, tell us that she can't have the cookie because she doesn't do gluten or food dyes. Could she have this? This is gluten free. And it's like, you know, super processed chip thing.

And then another thing and I looked at her and I said, oh, is Stella upset? And she said, no, she's dancing with her peers. And I said, believe me, I really appreciate you reaching out.

But Stella ate right before dance. She just wants to play with her friends and dance. This is not an issue for her. It may be an issue for you, but she's okay.

And I think it extends to her not joining in on bullying on the playground, her not having premarital sex, her not making choices with drugs and alcohol.

We are going to be different. And that's okay to start to teach our children that and build confidence and let them be in this world. But not of this world.

And food is one way, I believe, to instill that value that will give back dividends. I love that I see ahead. I've thought about that because that's constantly when I get hit, you know, like you're not not she's not normal.

And then my other pushback is like, I don't want her to be normal, though, because cultural norms are quite sad when we're talking about child mental and metabolic health. Right?

Why would I disempower her? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's hard because I've kind of like, been like, okay, you can't have regular Oreos. We'll do gluten free. And I'm like, oh, I need to stop doing that because I don't like fitting in.

And I say my excuses, oh, I have a 13 year old and 17 year old and and I want to equip them with the ability to say no because like you were saying, it could be other things. It could be drugs. It could be.

And I talked to them about that stuff, and I tell them it's not okay to fit in, and they see me not fitting in all the time or not eating all the things.

But but it is hard and sometimes, you know, even say that they're picky eaters. That makes it in even more challenging things for parents and parents listening.

Yeah. So how how do you do it? Deal with the challenge of like, picky eaters who say you are cooking all the home cooked food and their palate is just not getting to the point you want it to?

And nothing is more frustrating than spending money on highly nourishing foods and then feeling anxious or stressed at the dinner table. Or, you know, trying to hold your willpower while you're communicating with your eyes

to take a bite and not understanding the right way to approach that.

And I think it's important to know as parent that, you know, again, as early as toddlerhood, as early as for sure, adolescence kids are always looking at boundaries where they have autonomy and control, and food can be a space where they try to power play, and, or claim control.

And I say that that's beautiful, but we need to synergize and work with them and ensure that it's in an in an empowering way. So one thing that's really important when we talk about picky eaters is that I really feel that snacking and constant grazing is a complete de value to nutrient density and also to, healthy eating habits.

And all too often what's happening is our kids get home from school and they're grazing or they're snacking, and then they truly aren't hungry at dinnertime.

And the meals often have because of protein, because it's savory and vegetable, etc., the most nutrient density. And so I'm a pretty big proponent of removing grazing and reducing snacking based on that child's metabolic flexibility so that they are all wired to survive and they have a desire to eat at meal time. That's important.

If your child doesn't have a desire to eat at meal time, you're setting yourself up for a huge uphill battle. Yeah. So how do you have any tips for that for so I don't know about you, but my kids, I feel like especially my nine year old now, but he was in kindergarten during the pandemic that it set him up for snacking and like associative.

Like, if I'm doing this, I need this snack or yeah, it's just like, he wasn't like a huge snacker. And you know, when my kids do snack, when we're out about, sometimes I just have beef sticks and I'm like, you are really hungry.

You can have beef sticks or olives and and I'm I we are not perfect. We try to do the best but but snacking in general I have like two of my kids are big snackers.

And I need some tips if you have any even. Yeah. So so one option is, is you can offer the leftovers from the night before like, hey, you're hungry before dinner, you can have dinner.

This dinner, is it ready. But last night's dinner is ready. And that's an opportunity. We can also keep snacking to just non-starchy vegetables. And again, this is this is dependent on we're saying that we're having a picky eater that isn't eating their dinner.

This is not the high school soccer player that crushes the meal and has seconds they absolutely metabolically afford in a snack. And and they're eating.

And that's good. So again this isn't an across the board. This is specific to those that aren't showing desire or willingness to eat at the evening dinner time.

You know, so snacks change in composition of becoming less calorically dense, maybe being maybe less excited, or, less dynamic of flavor profile. So again, could be like cucumbers and carrots.

Okay. That's a reasonable if you need to crunch on something while you're doing your homework. That's totally cool. Could even go into like Apple with nut butter and then just kind of watching again what portion, what combo works where they're still retaining and have an appetite would for certain cut off at least two hours prior to the meal.

So if you're serving dinner at six, snack time is done by four so they don't get home till 430. It's like, well again, just down to those free veggies kind of choices.

And then if you notice that they're cleaning their dinner plate, then we figure out what is a balanced snack. And I always use that phrase of no naked carb.

So if they're having a fruit, or if they're having some form with starch, we always want a nut butter or we want, pistachios, or we want a beef stick.

Totally. Or, salami or a clean, protein source that can pair off that glycemic index. And I think what's really important, we're talking about picky eaters at the dinner table is, again, with kids wanting to be seen and heard is guided conversations.

So having the time, even though we're frustrated to ask what they don't like about said meal and really processing through, we have an entire table of naturally nourished kids called Taste Adventure Worksheet, and in there we rate appearance so it can be descriptive terms like Stella used to say that cooked bell peppers were slimy worms.

That's way more helpful for me as a mom than gross or disgusting, because I never saw them as slimy worms. But then I was like, oh, I guess that. So what if I diced them and then she said, at age three, yeah, if you date them, I'll eat them.

It's like, okay, easy now. I'm not stressed out about bell peppers anymore. So if appearance, texture, flavor, you know, we we break down these things.

Picky Eaters, Snacking, and Meal-Time Strategies

Is it too bitter? Is it to sour? Is it spicy? And so once we have an understanding of what they don't like, we want to join them in partnership of figuring out their willingness to try that food again in a different preparation.

So I see that you didn't like the broccoli. It didn't have any flavor, mom, or it was too soggy or it was, again, we can't use just gross. What was it that we didn't like?

Okay, what if I tried the broccoli crispy and smashed with parmesan? Would that be something you're interested in? And when they make that agreement, when they have that verbal contract or that synergy, they have more joy at the dining table because they feel special and seen and heard.

You made that just for them. And so there is such a higher likelihood that they will try it and accept and like it because they acknowledge that partnership.

So, you know, we can approach that same way in a protein. It can take up to ten times of trying new foods for children to accept them. And so we do track on the taste adventure.

And sometimes it goes from a frown face to just a medium face. And that's okay. That's a moderate acceptance. But we can often move at least one scoring by working with our kids in that process.

And again, I think it extends beyond that one meal for them to feel seen and heard that they're wanting to work with you at the meal time. I love that they're feeling that control, where as a kid, I think they need that.

They want to take control, but if they're taking control in a negative way with food, that's a problem. And with snacking, it kind of goes back to that.

They're like, well, I'm going to get I can get my own snack and it's my choice. And I remember telling my one son who were trying to work with his nutrition a little more, I'm like, it's okay to be hungry.

Like, it's okay to be hungry. We actually want to feel hungry sometimes, like now. Thirsty like that's yeah, we'll take care of that. But you can live a long time without eating.

I try to remind them, you know when they're, when they are hangry or something and. Yeah. Yeah. And then I also explain, like the Snickers commercial, they're hangry because they're on a roller coaster. Yeah.

And then and then you're literally treating that with another roller coaster of sugar. Right. So it's that is not a good thing to be hangry. That means you are metabolically unfit, right?

And you know, our kids at all ages will have a different hook of why. And that matters too. So if it's the teenager

dealing with acne or the teenager that wants to get a scholarship for their sport, or it is the, you know, adolescent that is interested in dance or etc., it's important that if we if we want to communicate with them, a desire for them to eat said food, we explain to them why it's important and we don't dumb it down so much.

You know, we as an early age, we talk about the power of protein and brain and muscle. And then we can start to talk about phyto compounds and antioxidants, early defining colors and eat the rainbow.

And this is why we look for 2 to 3 colors on the plate. We have an example of, an experiment on antioxidants in the book where, you know, you slice an avocado or an apple and you put lemon or lime on one half and you leave it on the countertop and you don't put it on the other half.

And so you literally get to see with your child what is oxidative stress, what happens in the browning versus the non. And that connects when they have these connections those really anchor.

Hey when you have things that have vitamin C like we squeeze on that, it's protecting your cells like a shield and you're not browning and aging. Isn't that cool.

And I think it really does when they have those ahas and they understand the why, then it's not just because mom said it's not just because this is presented.

It's because mom cares about making me a superhuman. And I want to use food as medicine to be powerful, too. And I think that that's so important to keep bringing it back to kids wise, which will evolve over time, but it keeps them again in a space of empowerment to be willing to choose the nourishment.

Yeah. And kids are smart. They they listen and pick up on everything. So if like, yeah, they don't want to hear I said, so you need to eat. Yes. And we give them like we need to give them more credit.

They are very ology. And if we say something like they'll repeat it, I'm sure that's happened to you, where they repeat stuff about like, you know, like mine about gluten or about GMOs, and you'll just hear them talking to an a kid about that.

And they're like, but but yeah. So and letting them make connections when they do make mistakes or stumble, which again happens in the real world, you know, we're at that stage of, you know, we have guidelines. This is how we eat in our home.

This is what I will never issue with. When you're in a birthday party, you can make a choice. And, you know, for such a while, parents were making a special gluten free thing for Stella.

And then it would be almost worse because she felt like she had to eat the special thing because they went out of their way. And so now we don't, you know, we just kind of let it flow.

And she has that at times. Oh no, thank you. And then she'll tell me, oh my gosh, I did have this and that. And I got a sugar rush. And I was sweaty and my belly ached.

And it's like, well, that's what that feels like. And you know, that was a little stressful to your body. So, you know, how can we change next time type of thing and go from there?

Yeah, it's good when they, like you said, when they do kind of slip up and then you're like, well, how is this making you feel? Not good. And that's why we try to avoid it.

Yes, it's it's good for them. What are four key nutrition priorities when it comes to nourishing our children? So starting with whole real foods is the first thing.

And so I often will use the phrase God food. You know food that is made by our creator versus manufactured in a factory by a food scientist. And unfortunately, again, a lot of kids and adults are actually eating what I wouldn't

identify as food at all to begin with.

I would call them ultra processed products. So not ultra processed foods. And so, you know, we have to first ask ourself, can it wilts? Can it break down?

Was it once viable and alive. So all God food was once viable and alive. It either grew on something or it was it had a mother. If we're talking about, you know, animal products and protein.

And so that's defining criteria. First you know what food is. And starting with a diet of a foundation of whole real foods matters. And then you know, we even would consider things like what's happened to it since harvest.

You know, so when we're talking about, glyphosate or other herbicides, not only are they being applied during the agricultural growing experience, but now they're being applied as a desiccant or a secondary spray, which is why we're seeing those higher in right in, kids cereals and snack foods and those grain products.

So we have to ask, is it a hollow food? What's been done to it since harvest? Have all of its edible parts or many of its edible parts been stripped? And if that's the case, that's what takes us from white flour all the way back to what I would call a God food, which is like stone milled ground, heirloom, chemically free grown sour dough which can actually be a viable, nourishing food.

But if we're eating out in the real world, we're probably avoiding grain because we can't always meet that criteria type of thing. Right. And so starting with Whole Foods is number one.

The second is focusing on protein. And, I mean, I could go off on all of the studies on cognition. Protein is so essential for the prefrontal cortex, which is where we have our more executive decision making occurring.

And so when we're talking about ADHD, we're talking about behavior. We're talking about focus and concentration. If we are not getting ample protein, which is also the amino acids that are the building blocks for our neurotransmitters, we are setting up for mental health concerns.

And we're setting a disservice for our kids on a cognitive level. So meeting your kids protein needs is that second priority after ensuring we're eating whole real foods.

And I give you a section of calculating macros based on the child's age and weight to determine how many grams that may look like. It may not be surprising.

It's about double what the AP guidelines are. The AP guidelines are set to prevent wasting like in a third world country. They are not set up for metabolic and mental health for our children or adolescents.

And so really ensuring that we're getting generally about 20g of protein per meal, and that can start as early as age four based on body weight for many.

And then we're really looking from there, after whole Real Foods getting minimum protein met, on balancing out blood sugar. So keeping carbs in check.

So if there is a carb, we like it to come from produce so that we're also getting antioxidants in the mix. So this could be roasted sweet potato or apple slices or berries, or any form of a whole food based fruit or starch.

And by keeping that in range brings in our fourth, emphasis, if you will, which would be balancing out with, healthy fats. And so for healthy fats, we actually meet quite similar to the AARP guidelines.

Protein, Carbs, and Healthy Fats for Children

Our carbohydrate recommendations with naturally nourished kids are half, so we kind of flip flop protein and carb. Maybe not a surprise to people who study on their own nutrition and where our American guidelines are.

And so we invert the protein and carb. We keep fat very similar. But when we're talking about the fat, it's more about whole food choices. So eliminating or at least limiting significantly the industrialized seed oils, using grass fed butter, using nuts and seeds.

I even talk about avocado oil and how that's kind of a halo food. You know, a lot of us think of avocado oil as well. It's not a seed oil. So I'm going to eat avocado chips and avocado oil, this and that.

And really it still is solvent or hexane derived. So we're still getting hexane as a byproduct. Often it's still bleached. You know, unless you're getting an unrefined avocado oil that is green and has polyphenols and vitamin E intact, you're probably getting more of an industrialized oil with that choice.

So we really do a lot more olive oil in our recipes for that reason. And I think really, once you're hitting those, those four areas of focus based on your child's need, you can adjust the levers to their metabolic flexibility.

Yeah. And your guidelines are similar to what I recommend for adults. Right. It's and that's a thing your kids should be looking at what you eat and modeling it and and vice versa.

And that's where it becomes like a whole whole kitchen life for for everyone. So those are great tips. And definitely kids are not eating enough protein like for sure.

And then we then we have them, you know, on medication for ADHD or something like that, you know, and I was just speaking with a mother of one of my patients and, and I'm like, you know, if he's not going to eat protein, at least we can just do amino acids.

And I know that we're supplementing amino acids, but if they're not eating the protein and they're struggling, we got to get it in somehow. And that can really help kids because yes, neurotransmitters come from amino acids.

And and this is why anyone if you give them more protein and have that first, they're not going to snack as much and they're not going to crave those sweets.

So. Right. Yeah. And and you can just start with like one simple change every meal if you're listening and your kids, you just feel like they're struggling.

Like with all of this, like, you feel very loss. So I mean what would you tell them? Like what would be one change? I would say start to focus on protein first for sure.

So, right, like help your kids to identify what is the protein containing food, have guided conversations with them about why it's important, and make sure that they are educated on what's their protein in the plate so that they know okay, if I'm helping to build my lunch, that section is always the protein.

And I can choose from this, this, this, and like we've seen in adults, you know, because adults often are more metabolically handicapped because we've gone years of insulin resistance or years of more ultra processed foods.

Sometimes just adding the protein when we're talking about metabolic issues doesn't do the trick. We have to actually sensitized the insulin receptors first, because until our insulin resistance goes down, women in their perimenopause phase will still not get those results.

They're looking to see if they're just chasing protein. And so I think again, almost that very close second is on identifying carbs and carb control and making sure that we're watching that glycemic index.

So the no naked carb okay. Yep. So those are great. So what do you want to grab. String cheese stick. You know what's your fat or your protein. And as they're grabbing it we're identifying these foods so that they can feel empowered and understand those pairing.

And we have a section called Carb pairing worksheet, where you can work with your child and come up with five

snack combinations. You go through your pantry as an exercise and identify what are the carbs in the protein.

And I even suggest maybe color blocking your pantry, especially if you are allowing more of like that. Montessori approach of kids being able to grab their own foods or more actively participate that they know based on color code of you know, what they're grabbing and then as they age, they just identify the foods within that.

Because again, it does come down to that autonomy and keeping them present in the food preparation as much as possible, which plays a huge role as well.

Yeah, absolutely. Now talking about nutrition and development of the jaw, like we have seen, bone structure, jaw, you know, more snoring, a lot of problems with tonsils and adenoids because we're not developing properly anymore.

And how do you think that processed food has played a role with this? Yes. So it was really interesting. I put a section in, after baby led weaning on toddlers, because we try to again provide guidance from baby led weaning all the way through teens.

And I was talking about the importance of getting dense foods and activating the job. But when I dug into the literature, I was quite astounded to actually see that there can be hippocampal shrinkage when we aren't eating dense textures.

Also, I know with my work with the anti-anxiety diet that if we aren't priming our digestive system in that parasympathetic. So that's that regulatory rest digest, but also anxiety, lytic anxiety reducing space versus that sympathetic fight or flight surge of survival.

You know, our kids are in LED school rooms with a lot of EMF and a lot of stressors, not just the emotional and mental of learning, but there's also physiological stressors that they're exposed to.

It's really essential that at that meal time, they're salivating and they're activating their jaw, because that actually gives the body biofeedback that it is in an active parasympathetic time stamp, and it helps the body to feel safe.

We've seen cortisol values go down when the jaw is salivating and masticating, and we don't do that with ultra processed. Even if they're crunchy chips, they're pre digested for us essentially.

So they still can kind of melt in our mouth. I'm talking about like raw carrots and talking about steak. I'm talking about chicken. I'm talking about meat.

And things that actually require that jaw function because yes, you know, via the work of Doctor Weston, a price we've seen from that primal jaw as now we are getting compounded, teeth needing extractions, that snoring and apnea is that cognitive decline is on the rise.

But on the immediate, I would say we're seeing concentration focused and stress response being impacted. And so really wild to think that just giving your child something that they have to activate that chew at lunch helps to signal to their brain and their body that they're safe.

If you imagine this, when you're high stress, you usually have no appetite. And you would never be running from a cheetah and chewing on a steak at the same time.

And so, you know, we always wait till we get into that parasympathetic space to dine, and we need that biofeedback from the meal to tell the body that we're eating.

Yeah. And also not have distracted eating, you know. Yes or. Yeah. And that they're chewing it off. My my youngest, my five year old just had a, my functional, you know, therapy session.

And we were talking about chewing and and I was just like watching. Yeah. He chews maybe five eight times and

then swallow. So now we're working at dinner time like let's 220 times that, you know, we really got to activate that our Salvatore glands.

We need to chew it up enough so it's digested and all. See this in my adult patients in their stool panels that they are not chewing their food enough and think about like we're all, like, rushed all the time.

And even eating is rushed, you know, and it's like, no, you got to chew. You got to slow down. Oh gosh. Like eating in cars, you know. Oh yeah, it's terrible.

And I'll even tell me what was the impact on to the tired of the cake. If we're not chewing, we don't get that biofeedback to the brain that we're satiated either.

And, you know, we've seen that with liquid calories not registering as much as solid foods. But I would argue even more so when you're activating the mandible, you're going to get better feedback that you're eating.

You had an eating experience. Yeah. Yeah. Well it's it's hard though.

Chewing, Jaw Development, and Digestion

I mean I will have mothers that, you know, they'll say we're back in the sports season and I know I have to plan more. So we're prepared and we're not like going through the drive through.

And yes, and I guess like, you know, there is a balance. So if you do have to go through the drive through, same thing if you're going to chick fil A, try to not go through the drive through, sit down, eat, make sure they're eating their protein first and then the carbs.

You know, they can just get a burger patty and eat that first. And if they want fries, then they can have that after they eat their meat. So I think that there's also compromise in the different seasons that people are going through with their children.

And understanding that the bun trade off is because that's a carb, as are the fries. And so you choose between, you know, kind of thing. And so I think that that that kind of allows that tie in.

And, you know, as we're talking about you also as a fair thing, you know, I'm sitting here sipping on a smoothie. Now comes times and places where we do need liquid nourishment.

We do need easier things to assimilate and absorb at times of higher stress. And so if I'm in clinic or I'm in interview season, I don't have much time during my clinic time to get back into that parasympathetic.

So I love tuna salad. I love cottage cheese with olive oil and flaky salt and sprouts, or a green smoothie with grass fed way. Now with that being said, I like to balance that out with start and finish meals.

That includes sit down and chew. And so right. If we're rushing between things, absolutely. Make a nourishing smoothie for your kiddo with cacao powder and peanut butter and grass fed whey and whole milk and maybe half of the frozen banana.

And that's fantastic for them to have or to bring to school, and keeping a slow water bottle which will keep temperature controlled. So not to say that things can't be nourishing, that don't require chew, it's just all about that balance.

And, it's so important to at least anchor, primary time of sit down and togetherness for meals. Yeah. Okay. I love that you brought up whole milk. So. Well, I was born in the 80s, and that was when the low fat, horrible, low fat craze.

Yes. Right. Yeah. So I grew up on skim milk, which has a lot of sugar. And now, like, oh my goodness, it was

actually funny. You'll laugh at this alley.

So I accidentally, the, the one where we get our milk from right now. We used to do raw milk. I have to find a raw milk person in Tennessee, but we get it where it's pasteurized but not homogenized.

And they were out for a while. Something happened with their equipment. So I just was at Whole Foods and I just got like, glass milk from a local farm.

And I accidentally grabbed skim milk and and I didn't realize it till I bought it, brought it home. And my kids are like, what is this? This looks so gross.

And because it looked almost like blue, but it was so funny because they were like out of their minds about it. And I'm like, yeah, that's what, like everyone told us to drink in the 80s, which is.

Yes, but but can you, can you explain to the parents why you don't want 2% or skim? Why whole milk? We don't have to be afraid of it. And it's best for kids.

Yeah. So, you know, dairy facts are unique. There's actually a compound called clays or conjugated linoleic acid. These are very favorable for supporting insulin signaling in the body favorably.

So we don't see as much insulin resistance when we're getting healthy clays in the body. Very good for the brain. And we have a good array. If it's grass fed milk of even omega three fatty acids that we can get in the whole form.

I just believe very much so that the way that things are presented to us in their most natural form, again, are all of its edible parts intact. And so in the sense of skim milk, we have skimmed it of the fat to make heavy cream.

And, you know, that has been done traditionally because we want to make a lot of things out of the milk. We want to make cheese, want to make butter, we want to.

And so of course there's going to be byproduct, but that doesn't mean that the byproduct is the most nourishing or wholesome option. So the integrity in which milk comes out of the cow, where there actually is lactase to offset the lactose, where there is pro bacteria, where those fats have not been heat scrambled or altered are going to be in arguably the most nourishing options.

And then I agree, low heat, processed, non homogenized is a really good close second. That still doesn't denature the fat globules as we would see in an ultra heat processed option.

And especially once, then that's all skimmed out. Can we talk about raw milk? Are you okay with that? Yeah. Yeah okay. Okay. I don't know your stance on raw milk.

So that's what I'm thinking. I know what it is. But I did, you know. Yeah, yeah. So I had a natural food market for a very short period of time. 18 months is very hard to run.

Oh, believe it or not, food is very, expensive commodity. And, you know, we were trying to work with all direct ranchers. I'm in a rural town out here.

I live on 15 acres. And so we have, grocery store. And so I really worked to try to create, you know, a big deep freeze model of kind of bring to life a farmer's market in a shop.

And so with my experience there, I can say a lot because I have visited multiple raw milk farms. And at the end of the day, it comes down to the producer and the integrity.

And if you are drinking raw milk, you need to visit the farm. I do believe that very strongly. So especially yes, our children can have more susceptible immune systems.

Raw milk is lovely, though, because we see reductions in asthma. We see reductions in allergy because we're getting those immunoglobulins from the raw milk product, which would also be heat sensitive, and not provided with a pasteurized product.

So immunoglobulins are fantastic. They can help our immune system to survey. So again less maybe food allergen or environmental allergen less inflammatory response even less susceptibility to virus and pathogen from exposure from others etc..

But because it isn't pasteurized, it also itself can be a source of pathogen.

Whole Milk, Raw Milk, and Dairy Choices

So, you know, when a raw dairy farmer has high integrity, is going through the processes and practices, where they are cleaning the udders and they have you have seen their facility, and you actually can look at the cows and they're healthy and happy and not too dense.

Then I tend to say that that's absolutely a net benefit option. But I wouldn't just across the board, an exception of raw cheeses, which have lower risk, because I have in that time stamp seen outbreak.

And so, you know, I do think that it's important to always take into account the immune susceptibility of, the individual. And if they have a high compromised immune system, so not necessarily autoimmune, but are susceptible to virus, bacterial infections, etc., working with them, maybe with serum bovine immunoglobulins first to build up their immunoglobulin support of their system or colostrum would be a good approach.

Maybe preceding for some kiddos that are a little bit more vulnerable. that's so interesting about raw milk. I definitely agree that you need to check out where you go.

And I'm still trying to find someone in Tennessee because I had an awesome farm in Ohio. If anyone needs recommendations now, let's end with a couple of awesome recipes for kids that you have found really helps their palate and makes them happy.

Yeah, so I'll just share some of my faves from naturally Nourished Kids, which dropped the tember 16th. So we have it broken down from six, which includes some of those homemade protein shakes and smoothies and even collagen strawberry lemonade, which is a very popular one.

I made that for Stella's fourth birthday as the Princess party theme. Pink, pink Princess lemonade. We have, salads and soups, and it's an entire chapter devoted to bone broth based soups.

So our broccoli cheddar soup is phenomenal. We have a great Tex-Mex soup in there as well. We have a couple different meatball recipes, so we have a great bison meatball recipe, a pork egg roll, recipe of a meatball, which is really fantastic.

And then we have a couple recipes that incorporate organs. So we have a superfood chicken nugget which uses frozen cauliflower and an ancestral blend of chicken.

And they're really fantastic. It's, dredged with a little bit of an egg wash and an almond flour, topping, I guess, if you will, or coating, and those are oven baked.

And I always say make a double batch and freeze. So you have some for a quick grab. Busy night. We have paleo chicken tenders with a turmeric honey mustard sauce.

We have pumpkin zucchini muffins, fruit leathers, dirt cake, and even Greek yogurt cheesecake bars. It's 100 plus low glycemic, antioxidant rich recipes for the whole household.

And we even include little icons as taste adventure recipes. So, if it's like our starting Thai cakes, or if there's a way

to get kids involved, we call out, to get your little helpers active in the kitchen.

Oh, I love it.

Kid-Friendly Recipes and Closing Resources

And this is ages, what, two to, 8 to 8 times to teens, right? You know, and you can even get some tips on savory starts. So right away could be a nine month I love it.

I definitely want to grab grab it for my kids so I can be like, hey, we're going to do one new recipe a week and just to expand their palate a little more.

So that's so exciting. Thank you so much. I'm so excited for your new book, and I love how you're just changing nutrition for kids because that's where it starts, right?

Like, yeah, that's where health starts with the kids. So parents you there's no shame. There's just growth and, little changes at a time, right? Yes. And you know, for mamas and dads listening, it's also about, like you said, they watch us eat, but they also watch us prepare.

So I always say, like, find peace in your heart. Find release and surrender to the mundane. Find beauty in the mundane and the simplicity so that you don't find dread in your kitchen.

It should be the cornerstone of your home, and it should really be a place of joy. Deep conversation, a space for spiritual growth and also, of course, nourishment.

I love that. All right, Ali, your books coming out, we'll link to that. Where else can everyone find you at? So I'm at Ali Miller, R. D., on social media.

So Instagram, Facebook. And then the website is Ali Miller rd.com. And I'll also send you in a follow up email. So you can put in your show notes, a bonus guide that we're giving away free that has preorder or if the book is out live by the time this releases, it will have ordering information, but it has an extra six recipes a week, meal plan and grocery list and an immune guide.

So really timely for parents at this time. It's all for free. Yes, that is so exciting. So grab those bonuses and thank you so much and congrats Ali on another book coming out.

Thanks. My pleasure. Great to chat.