



Empowering You Organically - Season 7 - Episode 49

Title: How a Mother Changed Her Family's Health Organically with \$100 a Week on Groceries

Hosts: Jonathan Hunsaker, TeriAnn Trevenen

Guest: Suzie Skougard

Description: We love sharing the real-life health journeys of our followers. This week Suzie was kind enough to share with you her family's journey to health after a life-threatening heart condition in her newborn daughter, battling Postpartum PTSD, an endocrine disorder diagnosis for her young son, a celiac diagnosis for her young daughter with Down Syndrome, and a life-threatening blood pressure scare for her husband. All in a very short time span. Wow. You want to hear how this fearless and determined mother turned it all around holistically for herself, and her entire family, without breaking the bank or budget. Truly inspiring!

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About Suzie

Suzie is a vegan health coach and blogger as well as a volunteer Crisis Counselor with Crisis Text Line. She owns a gluten free/vegan bakery just outside of Lansing, Michigan – [Carly Cakes](#) – and they operate under a mission to employ adults with developmental disabilities and pay them a living wage.

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What Inspired My Journey?

It was inspired by my youngest, who has Celiac. So, she also has Down's Syndrome, and it was kind of wanting to find a way that she could be included in birthday treats and celebrations.

Family Health Issues

- Youngest daughter born with Down Syndrome and a life-threatening heart condition that required open heart surgery at 4 months old.
- After youngest was born Suzie experienced Postpartum PTSD and a Rheumatoid Arthritis flare.
- Son diagnosed with endocrine disorder.
- Daughter diagnosed with Celiac Disease.
- Husband hospitalized for extremely high blood pressure.
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What Changes Did Suzie Make for Her Family?

- Before husband even got home from the hospital, I cleared out all the alcohol and high-salt foods from our house. But the doctors gave very little other direction for us to follow. But I knew I needed to start cooking more. And I didn't totally understand what the best options for us were then, nutritionally, but looking back, I see that I still established that routine of daily cooking and meal prep, and we were able to cut-out fast food and restaurant meals.
- I started doing daily yoga, first at home using Yoga by Adrienne free videos on YouTube, and then once I was comfortable enough, I found a studio and a gym.
- I also began heavily relying on Buddhist philosophy to unscramble the PTSD, which led me to a new understanding about the nature of suffering. So, the rest of the journey grew from my desire to reduce the pervasive suffering that I was putting out into the world and to free my mind from it.
- The day I woke up and began a different life for our family, I didn't wake up with any less depression or anxiety than I had the day before. I didn't wake up with less swollen, or achy joints than I had the day before. I didn't wake up with more money, or less on my plate. We were all extremely sick. There was nothing good that changed to lead us in that direction. Nothing about our situation really changed, *but the way that I looked at it did.*

It's A Process

- It really did come down to just baby steps. Like you know how everybody is into Marie Kondo and "The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up?" Well, I started "Marie Kondo-ing" my brain. All our routines, everything that we ate, I would examine everything we did objectively.
- So, my focus was progress not perfection, and those little daily choices led us to the point where we could start making big changes overall.

What Are Some Of The Changes Suzie Made In the Family Diet?

- Getting rid of soda was a huge one for me. I was a massive diet Coke drinker. There was a day that I drank 24 cans of Diet Coke. I knew that that was one of the ones that had to go right away.
- And then we started making the shift to sustainable living, and it was that environmental avenue that led me to Veganism. I watched a few vegan documentaries on Netflix, and from the reduce the suffering angle, I knew 100 percent that it was the next big step we needed to make.
- There are unhealthy vegans, and I didn't want to end up in just a new way to be unhealthy. So, I really started researching the vegan diet for evidence-based improvements. And through that, I found the Whole Foods Plant Based lifestyle.
 - Eating Whole Foods Plant Based has been linked to a number of health benefits, including reducing and even reversing heart disease, certain cancers, obesity, diabetes and cognitive decline.
- We do supplement our B-vitamins, but we also use a lot of a Nutritional Yeast so we get some in through our food. I also make sure the kids get plenty of fats for their developing brains, but they get it from things like avocado, or flax milk, so that they don't have that saturated fat and

hormones that dairy milk has. Flax Milk actually is a better source of calcium, protein and omega-3 than dairy.

- Cutting out processed foods also made it easier for our whole household to keep gluten at bay for my Celiac daughter, drastically cutting her risk of cross-contamination, improved her health dramatically.
 - Her skin got better, her stomach bloat went away, and leading me to find that gluten was also making my Rheumatoid Arthritis worse, it was contributing to inflammation.
- I started a daily routine of celery juice, amla, turmeric and ginger, that I toss everything in all together and drink it every morning, and I have never felt better.

What Was The Biggest Obstacle I Faced On My Journey?

- Everybody always asks me if it's about us getting protein. Broccoli has a higher protein per calorie ratio than steak. Obviously, you have to eat a lot of broccoli to get that, but it still has a higher protein per calorie ratio than steak. And when you're eating nothing but a lot of different types of veggies and a lot of different types of nuts and grains, it's really easy to make it up.
- It was actually a lot easier getting the kids to adopt the changes than I expected it to be. My son was an incredibly picky eater. But they adapted quite quickly because we created a whole routine around it, and they could help. Even the youngest one could still find something to do, whether it was just helping prepare the salads.
- If there's no junk to really choose from in the cupboards, they aren't going to pick it. It's just not there. If they have a choice between, "Okay, I have an apple or a banana," they still feel like they're making a decision. Their palates then changed over time, and now they prefer healthier foods, saying other foods, processed foods, when we go to a birthday or party or something, I do let them have whatever cupcakes are served, but they'll usually opt not to, saying that it's too sweet.

What About The Cost?

- Everyone thinks that it is so much more expensive to eat this way, but really, it's only buying the Organic/Gluten Free processed foods that carry that real heavy price tag. *I feed our family of 6 a gluten free, vegan diet full of color and vitamins, 3 meals a day for about 100.00 a week.* And we were probably spending that on Starbucks, soda, beer and wine alone before the change.
- The only real challenge is that it does require a lot of prep, whether meal planning, or prepping ahead of time

My Three Biggest Tips

- You don't have to make a sudden shift. You don't need to throw out everything processed in one go. Just maybe the next time you go to pick up burger meat, don't, and grill a portobello cap instead and see how you like it. Instead of milk, try a plant-based alternative and then go from there.

- I would also say turmeric and ginger. Add them to everything. And drink a ton of water. I drink over a gallon of water a day. I even have one sitting right next to me right now.
- And then, the very last one would be to Marie Kondo your brain. Don't mindlessly snack, pause and reflect before you eat, consider what that food is bringing into your life. If you don't need what it has to offer, if you don't want that contributing to your overall wellbeing, then just thank it, and let it go.

Suzie's Advice To Others

- I'd want them to know that there is no finish line on the path to wellness, the continued journey is the goal. So, you can't fail at this. Obviously, someone could say, if you aren't their perceived picture of healthy, then you failed, but you have to be able to give yourself some grace. No one starts their journey to wellness in the same place. We all have different experiences that have led us to where we are and have led us to different decisions. We were exposed to different food, and to different people.
- So, if you take a look at me, and you look at Simone Biles, I'm not going to come close to **that** image of health ever in my life. But for where I started just a few short years ago, and for where I am now, the amount of change I have adapted to, I am doing quite well, substantially better than where I was when I started.
- Every day that you wake up and commit yourselves to being on a journey, you are changing. You are becoming. And if things are in a continual state of change, motion, and becoming, then there is never really an end. Every day presents a new opportunity to get better, to learn something new, to show compassion to ourselves, others, animals and our planet. And kind of like with that Marie Kondo-ing our brain, every second really is a new chance to make a new choice.

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Deeper Dive Resources

Carly Cakes Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/carlycakesgfv/>

Carly Cakes Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/carlycakesgfv/>

Carly Cakes Website

https://swskougard.wixsite.com/carlycakesgfv/about_us

Postpartum PTSD

<https://www.postpartum.net/learn-more/postpartum-post-traumatic-stress-disorder/>

<https://www.postpartumdepression.org/postpartum-depression/types/ptsd/>

<https://www.psychiatryadvisor.com/home/topics/anxiety/postpartum-ptsd-beyond-postpartum-depression-in-maternal-mental-health/>

Crisis Text Line

<https://www.crisistextline.org/>

Celiac Disease Foundation

<https://celiac.org/about-celiac-disease/what-is-celiac-disease/>

Beyond Celiac

<https://www.beyondceliac.org/celiac-disease/>

Down Syndrome

<https://www.ndss.org/about-down-syndrome/down-syndrome/>

<https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/down-syndrome>

Pervasive Suffering

<https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/lam-rim/the-five-aggregates/all-pervasive-suffering>

Yoga with Adriene

<https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>

Marie Kondo

<https://konmari.com/>

The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing

<https://amzn.to/2PQI2nO>

Spark Joy: An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up (The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up)

<https://amzn.to/2PSG1GJ>

Whole-Foods Plant Based Diet

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/plant-based-diet-guide>

<https://www.forksoverknives.com/plant-based-primer-beginners-guide-starting-plant-based-diet/#gs.1cf0zj>

How Not to Die by Dr. Michael Greger

<https://amzn.to/2ZY5wq4>

Amla (Indian Gooseberry)

<https://www.organicfacts.net/health-benefits/fruit/indian-gooseberry-amlam.html>

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