

Family Health Revolution

By Carla Atherton

Text-only Preview Excerpt

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT CARLA

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

OUR STORY

YOUR WHY

WHAT IS THE HEALTHY FAMILY FORMULA?

The Magic Formula

What to Expect from This Book

PART I REDEFINING HEALTH

A

The Role of the Family

The Speed of Modern Family Life

The Quick Fix

Our New Normal?

Our Current Medical Model

Medicalized Health

Healthcare Is Not a Medical Emergency

Applying a New Approach

Redefining Health

Is Being Healthy Really That Hard (Or Boring?!)

Modern Chronic Illnesses

Modern Childhood Chronic Illnesses

Diagnosis

B

Introduction to the New Health Paradigm

A New Way of Thinking About Health (Systems Biology)

Functional Health 101

Lifestyle Medicine and How It Is The Answer



Autonomy in Family Health
Health Is a Family Affair
What We Teach Our Children About Health: Our Language, Practices, and Example
Recovery Is Possible

PART II THE SCIENCE

We Are Whole People: Mind, Body, and Spirit
Brain/Body Connection
Psychoneuroimmunology
The Mighty Immune System and the Role of Inflammation
Body Systems and Physiology
Brain Health (Brain Development, Brain Inflammation-causes and effects)
From Mouth to Anus: Oral Health, Gastrointestinal System, Digestion, and Elimination
Endocrine System
Detoxification Systems (include lymphatic and glymphatic)
Sexual Health and Development
Mental Health
Emotional Health
Methylation
Mitochondria
Electromagnetic Fields and Radiation (EMFs and EMRs) and Their Impact on Health
Energy Medicine (Bioenergetics)
Creativity and Play

PART III FOUNDATIONS FOR PREVENTING DISEASE AND BUILDING HEALTH

Our Basic Human Needs
Clean Air, Clean Water, Clean Food Sources, Shelter, Health, and Safety
Excess and Deficiency: The True Causes of Ill Health
Foundations of Health and How They Intersect

Foundation #1: Nutrition and Diet

Food as Medicine
The Only Universal Food Rules: The Whole Foods Diet
Special Food Considerations
How to Increase Your Chances of Healthy Eating Success
Reconnecting with Your Food: Gardening, Cooking, and Getting to Know Food Sources
Supplements
Can't I Just Supplement?

Foundation #2: Exercise and Movement

The Difference Between Exercise and Movement



Importance of Exercise and Movement
Types of Effective Exercise

Foundation #3: Sleep and Rest
The Circadian Rhythm
What Happens when We Don't Sleep
Sleep Disorders
The Difference Between Sleep and Rest
Sleep Hygiene
How to Get More Rest

Foundation #4: Breathing and Posture
Have We Forgotten How to Breathe?
Problems With Breathing
Breathing Techniques
Problems with Posture
The Impact of Proper Posture
Posture Tune-Up

Foundations #5 and #6: Mental/Emotional Health and the Spirit
What is Happening to Our M/E Health?
Our Western Culture: Do New Traditions Revolve Around Pop-Culture?
Reclaiming our Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Health
Gratitude, Meditation, and Other Tools For The Spirit

Foundation #7: External Environment
Our Planet and Other Life On It
Physical Environment (internal)
Physical Environment (external)
Family and Community Support
The Science of Parenting
Strong Family Connections
Therapies and Support
Social Environment
Energetic Environment
Media, Technology, and Social Media

PART IV STRESS

Physiology of Stress
Chronic Stress and Disease
Internal Stress



External Stress
Signs of Stress (symptoms both M/E and physical)
Additional Stress
Role of Stress in Disease
Reducing Physical Stress
Stress Reduction and the Relaxation Response
Stress Reduction Techniques for the Whole Family

PART V WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Everyday (Acute) Illnesses
Chronic Illness: Epidemic of Disease
Common Childhood Chronic Illnesses
-ADHD
-Addictions
-Allergy and Reactivity (Include Multiple Chemical Sensitivity)
-Asthma
-Atopic Conditions
-Autism
-Autoimmunity
-Emotional and Behavioural Problems
-Fatigue
-Gastrointestinal Problems
-Learning Disabilities
-Neurological Disorders (PANS/PANDAS)
-Mental Health Disorders
-Mood Disorders (Depression and Anxiety)
-Obesity
-Sensory Disorders
Causes of Disease and Illness
Environmental Factors that Block Good Health
Physiological Problems
Infection
Heavy Metal Toxicity
Vaccine Injury
Physical Injury
Total Load and Allostatic Load: The Tipping Point
The Role of Inflammation
The Role of the Immune System
The Role of the Gut
What is Oxidative Stress?
Excess and Deficiency



The Role of Detoxification
The Role of Environment
The Role of Genetics: Do Genetics Dictate Destiny?
The Science of Epigenetics: How Our Choices Have the Greatest Impact on Health
Other Contributing Factors to our Genetic Expression:
-Trauma (on/of switch)
-Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (on/of switch)
-Resiliency (on/off switch – it is what we do with the above that determines positive or negative outcomes)
Hospital Stays and Doctor’s Visits: Staying Sane and Knowing Your Rights
Loss and Grief

PART VI BEYOND THE BASICS

Progression of Disease and Illness
Symptoms Sound the Alarm: Disease Is Already Underway
No Symptom Is Benign
Finding Root Causes
When Testing is Necessary and What Tests to Get
Healthcare, Not Sickcare
When You Have Health Challenges
When Your Children Have Health Challenges
When Your Parents Have Health Challenges
Effective Traditional, Advanced, and “Alternative” Therapies
Parenting Children with Chronic Illness
Navigating Healthcare Systems
Be Your Family’s Best Advocate

PART VII RECLAIMING YOUR FAMILY’S HEALTH

I Don’t Have The Time, Money, Motivation, or Strength: Breaking Down The Barriers
Language Shapes Our Reality
Mindset and Motivation
Healthy Attitudes Around Health
Prevention, Maintenance, Longevity: Moving From Coping to Thriving
Genetics Revisited: The Role of Genomics in Health and Recovery
Lifestyle as Prevention
The Human Lifecycle: Health at Every Stage
-Preconception
-Conception
-Birth
-The Early Years
-Childhood



-Teenhood
-Adulthood
-Golden Years
Longevity and Aging Gracefully: How to Live Long and Prosper
Growing Older Naturally
Redefining Our New Normal of Life and Aging
Our Natural State of Being Human and Healthy
Vitamin N: The Role Of Nature
The Problem With Over-Medication
Why Go Natural?
Your Natural Medicine Cabinet
Returning to the Ease Of Health
Where Do I Start? Baby Steps
Quick Health Wins
Implementing Lifestyle Changes
Healthful Practices
Monitoring Your Health: Healthcare, Not Sickcare
Recovery Is Possible
Getting Organized
Building Your Healthcare Team
Slow Family Life

PART VIII CREATING A SAFE AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR FAMILY: THE HOW-TO

Healthier Home
Healthier Workplaces
Healthier Schools
Healthier Communities and Societies
Healthier Bodies: Our Internal Environment
Safety: When Our Children Need Protection
Physical Safety
Protection from Abuse (adults, disabled people, the elderly, children)
M/E Safety
Social Safety

PART IX PARENTING CHILDREN FOR HEALTH

Your Child's Health Starts with You
Connection and Communication Within the Family
The Science of Parenting
Compassionate Communication
The Importance of Grandparents, Aunties, and Uncles



Teaching Self-Care to Your Children

PART X ENSURING SUCCESS

Building Community, Finding Support

Navigating the Healthcare System

Autonomy in Family Health

How To Work With Your Doctor

Preparing for Appointments

Getting Your Poop in a Group: Why You Need a Plan and How to Make One

Finding Resources

Finding Information

Assessments

Additional Tips

New Healthcare Systems

CONCLUSION: MISSION COMPLETE

Measuring and Celebrating Success

Running the Marathon

Your Legacy

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Assessments

Appendix B: Suggested Reading

Appendix C: My Why

Appendix D: Readiness Scale

Appendix E: Family Health History

Appendix F: Family Health Questionnaire (Check in)

Appendix G: Food Diary

Appendix H: Testing Guide

Appendix I: Supplement Chart

MORE!

Further Reading Suggestions Throughout

Tips On How to Increase Health In Each Area

Current Stats and Research

Beautiful Photos, Charts, and Graphs

Guides and Checklists

Clickable Links to the Research and Downloads of the Guides and Appendixes

Digital Copy Revised and Updated Yearly

MP3s Available



MANUSCRIPT

DEDICATION

Of course, this is for my children, Nicholas, Olivia, and Isabel, for Brent, for my mom and dad, sisters, brothers, extended family and friends. Of course it is for them. This book is also for this earth we call home and for all the creatures on it. This book is for you.

ABOUT CARLA

Carla Atherton, MA, acreage-living mother of three, is the Founder and Director of the Lotus Health Project and the Healthy Family Formula, Host of the Children's Health Summit, Health and Nutrition Coach, Writer and Editor, Curriculum Developer, Publisher, Workshop Leader, Yoga Instructor, Health (R)evolutionary, and Children's Health Advocate.

Carla is a trained health coach through her work with Epidemic Answers Health Coach Training Course and Cynthia Pasquella of the Institute for Transformational Nutrition and has deepened her clinical knowledge of health, wellness, and functional medicine through her training with Functional Medicine University and Functional Diagnostic Nutrition, as well as her intensive yoga teacher training. She also holds an MA in English Literature with a heavy background in Women's and Gender Studies, Psychology, and Academic, Business, and Creative Writing.

Carla is also formally trained in a variety of other disciplines including magazine editing and publishing, social sciences, humanities, business development, and is usually taking one class or another regarding personal and professional growth. She has taught at both the university and community levels and has created educational materials both through contract by educational institutions and through her own initiatives and independent research. She has acted as instructor, director, writer, publisher, producer, program developer, and editor for a wide variety of projects and founded and ran the now laid to rest *Cahoots Magazine* as Editor-in-Chief for 8 years. She is a published creative and academic writer, enthusiastic lecturer, creative workshop instructor, and a caring and effective coach.

She has led many workshops in health and wellness, creative writing, philosophy, media studies, essay writing, and critical thinking for children, youth, and adults since 1998 and has written, produced, and delivered thousands of pages of curriculum for online as well as in-person delivery.



To Carla, health and wellness involves all aspects of the self, including the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. She encourages creativity and self-empowerment for anyone at any age or social status and is absolutely passionate about working with children, youth, and adults so they can find their own power to make their lives full of hope, happiness, and meaning. Alternative education is also a passion of hers, and she is continuously creating innovative ways to change lives through life-long learning by delivering her content using a balance of targeted use of our current technology with personalized experiences and in-person community initiatives and support.

Carla specializes in family health with a focus on functional, holistic, natural health and wellness, with specific interest in functional neurology, nutrition, digestive health, the science of mind/body practices, stress reduction, epigenetics, childhood chronic illness, geriatrics, autoimmunity, and immunology using the principles of lifestyle medicine.

Carla is a passionate advocate for client/patient care and education and believes strongly in the autonomy and empowerment of the individual, regardless of gender, age, race, or social status.

“I think that there is nothing that cannot be overcome given the right tools, support, and information and that we are never victims of our own circumstance, but are heroes in our own journeys. I believe strongly in individual autonomy, and I aim to elevate family health one empowered family at a time. In this way, we can collectively leave a legacy of health for our children.”

Learn more about Carla and the Healthy Family Formula at:
www.healthyfamilyformula.com

INTRODUCTION

The Sky *Is* Falling

When I think about the children’s story, “Chicken Little,” I think about this small, intense, reactionary chicken running around exclaiming to everyone that the “sky is falling!” His concerns, no, his *sheer panic*, is met with everything from rolling eyes to indifference. He is ignored and sometimes even ridiculed as he desperately tries to get the masses to look up, to see the imminent danger, to believe what he says so that his community can save themselves. Is Chicken Little making a big deal out of nothing, or does he see what the rest of us do not? Is this what many progressive healthcare professionals, parents, and functional and lifestyle medicine professionals are sounding the alarm about when they report that the health of our human population is on the



rapid decline, and all because of the choices we are making and the dangers we are ignoring?

Ooh, big questions that are difficult to face. I'm not sure we want to see.

ADHD, Alzheimer's, autism, obesity, autoimmunity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, fatigue, learning disabilities, mood disorders, eczema, allergy, asthma, and general malaise are just some of the conditions, diseases, and illnesses people are succumbing to in epic numbers, and even when their symptoms are undiagnosable or not defined according to any particular disease, people are coming to their healthcare professionals feeling not quite right, dragging, tired, never really well. It is reported that 10% of children in the US have ADD/ADHD, and 17% are labeled as "learning disabled," most schools are peanut-free zones due to the staggering number of children who have anaphylactic reactions to peanuts, and with autism rates climbing from 1 in 150 in the year 2000 to 1 in 68 in 2013, if this trend continues, a whopping 50% of our children born will have autism by the year 2032! The questions we are all asking are: why? What is happening? And what can we do about it: for our selves, for our children, and for our future generations?

Call me Chicken Little, but isn't it apparent that the sky *is* falling?

When a writer, artist, activist, mother or father, mover or shaker, embarks on a mission to help either themselves, their own families, or the greater world community, most of them say that all of the time and effort will have been worth it if they reach even one person. I don't feel that way. I am not writing this book to only reach you. I *want* to reach you, yes, and yes; I am so honored that you picked up this book and are spending this time with me. But I also want to reach your children, your extended families, your spouse and community. I also want to reach my own family, my own children and community. Call me co-dependent, I don't care. I have come to the acceptance that I am *not* OK if the people I love are not OK. And I am pretty sure you're not, either.

At a recent yoga teacher training, my teacher asked me what would happen if my children were all in a car together and died in a crash. I told her truthfully that not much would matter anymore. She challenged me on that through some philosophical talk and reasoned that whatever we do, it needs to be for ourselves – not in a selfish way, but in a way that is intrinsically motivating and not hinging on any particular outcome or for anyone else that may be there one day and gone the next.

I just wanted to say, "I know what you are trying to do here and get it, but I don't care. My children are my hearts walking around outside of me."



The fact is, I may not be very evolved.

Although non-attachment and letting go of outcomes has been a practice of mine to ensure the retention of my sanity, I am pretty darn attached to my children and the outcome of good health for them, the outcome of a good chance at a relatively healthy life.

We did another exercise where we had a partner, and we were to look each other in the eyes and non-verbally download our stories, our words of wisdom, to each other. So, without words, I told her that letting go of our children is just not possible and that even though we need to be motivated by our individual passions and values and creativity, it is OK if they are part of who we are and if our happiness is connected to theirs because isn't that the nature of love? Isn't that why it hurts to love sometimes? Isn't this why we fight so fiercely for certain things in life – for our survival and for that of our families, friends, and communities? My partner in this exercise cried as I "told" her this. And I don't know if her tears were because of the intensity of the exercise or because she could feel everything I was telling her. But she cried. And I didn't because I was feeling fierce and determined and purposeful. This was a very important message. Maybe the most important one I had to share.

This is my message to you.

We know there is more to family health than the new normal of sub-optimal health we are now experiencing. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, and caregivers strive for more for our families. I hope these words inform, inspire, and empower you so you can make that shift. happen! To recovery. To ease. To vitality.

I am a mother, writer, and researcher who didn't stop until I found the answers. My motivation? Some of the fallen were my own children. My own grandmother. My own friends. And many others who narrowly escaped death and many more who are still struggling. I asked why and dug deep into the science to find the causes so I could uncover the solutions; I discovered that health isn't found at the bottom of a pill bottle or in a one-shot remedy and that there were other people who could teach me what healthcare really should be. I also asked myself, Carla, is it really that bad?

You may ask me that very question. Was there ever a time in history that humans have been truly healthy? Are we any worse off than we were before? This may not be true in some ways, but most certainly is in others. We once suffered from plagues and died earlier from common everyday illnesses like influenza. A diagnosis of diabetes would have been a death sentence, and infections could run rampant causing death in very



short periods of time. Yet, in many places in the world, chronic illness was unheard of and happiness was found in community and healthy living rather than in therapy sessions and medications. We call these places the Blue Zones.

I ask: what are the biggest problems we are facing *right now*? How many of those problems exist due to “the nature of things,” and how many are caused by the decisions we are making? And instead of answering those questions of myself, I ask those questions of you. I encourage you to look around and note what you see. Even if you don’t have the stats and numbers and studies in your back pocket to validate your own concerns and observations, note what *you* are seeing in *your own* family, *your own* community, *your own* backyard? Have a look in your schools and workplaces, in the malls and hospitals and other public spaces. What do you see? And are you ok with it? We don’t need scientific studies to tell us that chronic illness, obesity, cancers, mood problems, and dementia are rapidly replacing generally good mental, emotional, and physical health. Although the evidence is undeniable and will be deeply explored in the upcoming pages of this book, we actually don’t need studies and research to assert that less of us are living as robust, vital, engaged, purposeful people well into old age.

What we do have right at our fingertips is very exciting, however. If we understand holistic health, that healthy lifestyle choices are exceedingly powerful, and couple lifestyle choices with modern acute care interventions that we can use when necessary (like when we have an injury or emergency situation), we have the opportunity to have it all. We can have the best of both worlds if we know what it means to be healthy and are aware of how we can attain that good health from the bottom up, from the inside out and the outside in. We can return to the nature of “human nature” and reconnect with our bodies, spirits, and the natural world around us.

Good health is multi-faceted, simple but not easy, and takes nothing less than a health revolution to attain due to our reckless, modern culture. Because we believe that faster is better and cash is king, we are taking great liberties at the expense of our own health and at the expense of the health of our children and elders. We need to make a change for the future of our very species. Now, I, for one, am ready to be healthy and happy; I, for one, want my children to suffer less and enjoy life more. I am ready for a change *for the better*. I am ready to redefine, yet, again, our new normal.

How about you? Are you with me? I appeal to you, fellow parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, are you ready to turn the tide?

Let’s look up and catch the sky.



OUR STORY

When we are moved to create something extraordinary, something that comes fully from who we are, from what gets us out of bed in the morning, from a clear and relentless vision, it often comes out of a place of necessity, a place of pain, from an experience or an event that narrowed your sites on a purpose.

My daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes in February 2012. I am reluctant to talk about this event as if it is the only defining moment in my life, and I certainly do not want to make my glorious, fierce daughter into a diabetes poster child, but the fact is that that turn of events changed the life course of everyone in our family. The ripple went wide.

Gone were the carefree days of eating whatever we wanted at potlucks and picnics, going out for ice cream, sleeping well and deeply at night taking for granted that everyone will wake up in the morning relatively happy. Here came the days of tests and finger pricks and needles, of frustrating doctor's visits, of fear that was so stealthy, so quietly present, that it would coolly walk into my mind like a ghost long after I thought it was gone.

On that first day, her father cried in the hospital kitchen asking me: "why couldn't it have been me?" as if it worked like that, as if it was his fault or as if he could take it from her.

My daughter stated to me from her hospital bed: "I am going to have this for the rest of my life," like she just knew, like some kind of wisdom came over her, and she understood what it all meant.

Me? I got busy, as I always do. I took charge and arrived at the hospital the next day with a pot of homemade soup determined to make her well.

But both my daughter and her father saw something I did not. They saw what I knew we could not focus on at the time or we would not get through. The very long road we had ahead.

My babe struggled. In the teen years, chronic illness is a tough row to tow. And even with what I know about health and about diabetes, in particular, I could not always reach her or help her as much as I would have liked. In all honesty, sometimes I felt I couldn't reach her at all, that all of the untruths we are taught about powerlessness and medicalized health and non-medical healing methods and nutrition and other lifestyle interventions were stronger than what her own mother and most fierce advocate was



trying to teach her. Diabetes made her, at times, prickly, alone, and angry. Everything would break apart with the slightest crunch of the eggshells that I walked on. She was not able to be as free as a teenaged girl wants to be, and in so many ways, her body became her prison.

All of you mamas out there know that once your children are born, the umbilical cord is never really severed. We feel our children's joy, but we also feel our children's pain. I once wrote in a poem that my children are "my hearts walking outside of me." I even wrote that line in the previous section of this very book. They are out in the world raw and vulnerable – they make *us* vulnerable to every heartbreak or challenge they encounter. Their joy is ours, as is their pain. And we want so desperately to fix them or patch them up.

So, I did another thing I do in situations I want to change: I spent countless hours adding certification after certification to my list of credentials, researching everything from blog posts by other parents to academic articles and research studies to materials from the schools I attended. I called doctors and practitioners and met the best in person. I learned from podcasts and lessons and trainings both scholarly and the stuff aired for folks like you and me. I dug deep into what might have caused one of my own to fall and how to get her back up, again.

And do you know what? I didn't reach that sunny place right away. In fact, I kept chasing the horizon and the sun kept setting. I felt alone. I felt overwhelmed. I felt that every moment that passed was another nail in my daughter's coffin.

I HAD to figure it out – what was the cause, and what could we do about it? And it got worse before it got better. My other two children had their own health struggles, one with depression and the other with severe anemia, and their father and I were falling apart, as well.

So, here I was, trying to make a fledgling business take flight, working so much that the lines between my work and life were practically non-existent, researching on top of that a minimum of 4 hours a day, lecturing and running programs, getting 3 kids off to sports 7 times a week, studying and meeting deadlines, trying to stretch the money we had to pay for testing and supplements that I was not sure were right or working, and navigating the healthcare system with forms and healthcare visits that left me frustrated, angry, disempowered, and hopeless that anyone at all could help us. I had to explain our diet and how we spent our money to relatives who could not understand. I was spent, emotionally and financially depleted, and spinning my wheels. What could I do?



One day, I was speaking with Brenda, our insurance broker, trying to figure out some details about our house insurance when the topic of health came about. For some serendipitous reason, I mentioned that we had been navigating health issues with one of our children. She asked me if our daughter's condition was terminal. Just like that.

I was a little surprised by the question, but told her that, no, it was not terminal, that it was chronic, that we have had a lot of success, but that new challenges were cropping up as we moved through life and the changes that come with it. It turned out that Brenda also has Type 1, and this connected us, for sure, but what she said next penetrated deep into my heart.

The reason she asked me about the status of our daughter's condition was that, years ago, she lost her young son to leukemia. I was amazed by her strength when she spoke so calmly and clearly about how he fought so hard for 6 years to live, while I cried on the other end of the phone. My mama heart went out to hers. The next story she told me was about her nephew who, like my daughter, had Type 1 but committed suicide at the age of 18. My own son was 18 at the time. What could that possibly be like?

Honestly, my friends, I often say that I do not know how people get through losing a child or the struggles they face every day when one of them is sick or hurting in any way. But do you know what? I do know. I know that the way we get through is to support each other by listening as well as sharing our own stories. By sharing what we have learned so we can help our fallen get back up, whether that be our children, our grandparents, or us.

Brenda said she regretted one thing: that she did not know then what she knows now. Isn't that always how it goes? If only I had known. I think this thought at times when I wrack my brain wondering what happened to our once-carefree daughter who was not damaged but has had to grow up perhaps a little too soon. But do you know what? I think that thought a lot less now. It flits by in my mind like a caged bird, and I let it go. I choose to focus on what we *can* do *now*. I choose to focus on what we have. And with that, we move on.

Parents and caregivers, you can't prevent everything. You can't know everything, and you do the very best with what you *can* prevent and know at the time. Although we parents need to be the head of our families and guide our children using our experience and what we have learned, a massive part of parenting is, ironically enough, letting go and surrendering. We must not beat ourselves up about the things we did not know or cannot control.



But what we *can* do is to build and act on what we *do* know and to share that knowledge with other parents. We can decide not to settle for less. We can become empowered and empower our children and broader communities.

Being empowered is to be able to access more support and information to make this thing we call health a little easier to navigate. No one person came to a space of health and happiness by doing nothing. Weight does not melt away without a change in diet or lifestyle. Good thoughts do not fall from the sky. You cannot close your eyes and hope the pimples the depression the addiction the asthma the allergies the chronic illness will just go away. Healthy habits do not form without action. There is no prevention without understanding the cause.

So, although we need to be gentle with ourselves, this gentle approach needs to be balanced with a good kick in the rear to grab the controls and fly the plane.

I couldn't help but cry when I listened to Brenda tell me about her two fallen children. Their stories have been ringing through my mind since and will continue to do so forever. Their story and those of my own children and the other families I work with every day solidify my mission, inform me as to what I need to do, and inspire me to create more ways to join forces with families who feel lost and hopeless and afraid or who just simply want some good, quality family health information. They are why I wrote this book.

So, how did I regain control? Or more accurately, how do I continually lose control but regain it again and again?

I read every book I can get my hands on, but I also reach out to people. Lots of people. I get educated by adding certifications and coursework to my degrees. Like an inquisitive, relentless 4-year-old, I ask so many questions to NDs and doctors and practitioners, in facebook groups and forums, and of my ever-growing list of contacts and colleagues that I am sure that I annoy a lot of people. And if they are annoyed or can't help, I ask someone else.

I not only ask for the advice and the thoughts these brilliant minds can offer but start projects, initiatives, and collaborative efforts with them to drastically improve the situations of families who are struggling with not only health issues but with all of the fallout that comes with them: Burn-out. Loneliness. Fear. Powerlessness. I created the Lotus Health Project, the Children's Health Summits, and the Healthy Family Formula knowing that they would grow up to be a health revolution. I am also continuing to figure it all out for myself at the same time as being a support to others, which is the best place to be if I am to make some real change. If you don't feel it, you don't know



where it hurts. Health is not only for the wealthy, the privileged, the formally educated. Community is not a hierarchy where a few are comfortable at the top and the rest are the lowly know-nothings. It is like the body – it is a system of moving parts, each one contributing, each one with a job to do, a strength, a purpose, each one essential for the health of the others.

Community is about mutual support where we are all teachers sharing our own individual expertise and information. A community is a space to both receive and to give, an exchange, a co-creation. So, yes, there are teachers, but those teachers also learn from their students. We are all both students *and* teachers.

Once I started to put myself and my work out into the world, I started to hear back from parents, grandparents, teachers, and others. Now, every day I encounter families just like ours. Families who want answers. Families who are ready to blow the lid off of this thing we call health.

When I send out information by way of my newsletters and other writings, including this book, I forever hope that my words resonate with you, that the people who read my work feel less alone, and I often receive feedback that confirms that they do. But what I also receive in return is a tidal wave of support for *me*. These parents and caregivers tell *me* that *I* am not alone!

The response I receive demonstrates exactly how we parents can navigate our way through our trials and tribulations: through the support of each other. To you, I say “thank you.” And with the strength I continue to gather from your candor, your support, your gifts of hope, I continue to create and uncover more resources for us all. For parents like you, and for mamas like Brenda.

As the saying goes, “a rising tide lifts all boats.” I am so honored and proud of what we continue to co-create in response to all of this, what we have co-created for families like ours: a creation that will be a game-changer, for both ourselves and for our children.

YOUR WHY

Well, all of that stuff in the introduction was the long way of telling you my “why” – my reasons for doing what I do. Now, I encourage you to do the same – to think about what pushes you out of bed in the morning, what keeps you aspiring for health, what compelled you to pick up this book in the first place. We always need to think about why we do what we do, otherwise we simply won’t do it or be half-hearted in our efforts. We need purpose, especially when things get a little (or a lot) difficult. Being



clear about your why gives you strength because sometimes it takes more effort to do what is best for you and your future than it takes to let things slide, including your health.

Why do you want to be healthy?

Is it because you want to be able to play with your children, your nieces and nephews, your grandkids? Is it because you are done with feeling tired and stressed? Is it because you want to experience more joy and fun and less sadness and depression? Is it because you want to live relatively pain and disease-free? Is it because you want to regain and/or retain control of your faculties and your body? Do you have books to write, projects to complete, houses to build, children to raise? Do you want to have the capacity to learn how to build boats or fix cars or piece together model planes and to be able to sail or drive or fly them? Do you have a very lengthy bucket list or just that one special thing you have always wanted to do? Do you want to feel engaged, alert, alive, spry, enlightened, purposeful, creative, inspired? Is it because you know that being healthy in every aspect will help you get closer to every one of your goals, to living a full life for as long as you have on this earth?

And is this what you want for your family, as well?

Take a few moments to close your eyes, and let those thoughts, those images, rise within you. I am fairly certain that it won't take long for them to wash over you like a fresh ocean wave.

Now hold onto those thoughts, smile, and set your intention to make them a reality.

WHAT IS THE HEALTHY FAMILY FORMULA?

The Magic Formula

Everyone wants to feel good. No one wants to feel sick, get injured, get old and stiff and achy. We want our elders spry and alert and our children vital and bright. We all want to know what the secret is and if there is a fast way to feel good, at least most of the time. I can tell you that there is no one magic bullet, but there *is* a simple formula. If we are running with the theme of simplicity, the *simple* answer is, "yes." And (are you ready for it?!) here it is:

Information + Support = Empowered, Healthy Families



This formula may seem simple, but it is by no means impotent. Information and support together make for a powerful, inspired, and revolutionary concept that, if understood and acted upon, will rock the very foundation upon which we are currently building our ill health. It all has to come down so we can rebuild it from scratch. In other words, this revolutionary formula has the potential to radically change lives, families, communities, and the world – for the *better!* It is the apex of every good thing that each person needs in order to have their best chance at regaining and sustaining their health and vitality.

Through supporting each other and getting the right professional support when needed:

Families learn how to get and stay well using a functional, integrative, holistic approach to health informed by scientific research, ancient traditions, and healthy communities, and by addressing all aspects of family health: the mind, body, and spirit, and on the social, global, and environmental levels. This is what we call *lifestyle medicine*.

It is a returning to the wisdom of our communities, our families, our very bodies. It is a kind of health that bursts forth from within, touching everyone with the rays it emanates. Is this a romantic view? You bet. Why not reach for the very best we can get? Why not strive for peace, for ease, for satiation? Yes, we will have days where we fall ill, where we have to recover, where we are injured, and where we full-on suffer. So, let's talk about ways we can make those days fewer and further between, where we can come back stronger than ever when we make it through each and every one of the storms.

And when we do it together, we have a much better chance. We need walking groups, support groups, teen nights, and community fun days. We need a neighbor to walk with, a dog to run, an art group or a craft club. We need the internet, books, bookstore staff, and librarians. We need coaches and cheerleaders and gurus, poets and artists and science writers. We need online courses and productive facebook groups, support professionals, and a friend to talk to. Need I say more about community? Need I say more about support?

So, again, what is the road to an empowered, healthy family? First, we need accurate, trusted information. And second, we need ample support to help us put that information into practice while actually enjoying this thing we call life. Both of which I will supply plenty of within these pages.



What to Expect from this Book

I won't waste too much time talking about how to use this book and what you can expect to find or discover, but I do need to say something about this. Here is a quick overview:

This book is big and comprehensive. If you are a reader or a research geek or someone who just loves to know everything, this is a good thing. If you just want to refer to information as the needs arise for you, this is also a good thing. There are a few ways you can read it: cover to cover (the information does progress and flow from one section to the next); section by section; or if you want to cut to the chase when you have one particular condition or topic that you want to refer to right away, just read the relevant excerpts as this book also functions as an encyclopedia of family health information. Just use the index and the Table of Contents to guide you to the right sections.

Let me be clear that the purpose of this book is not to cite studies and report stats, although I do cite and report a great deal. This book also contains stories, anecdotal evidence, and my own vision of what a family health revolution looks like. It is intended for everyday, smart people who want to know more about how to elevate their family's health and also other health professionals who are interested in powerful ways to care for the people who seek their help. If you want more proof or evidence beyond what I provide within these pages, please do keep researching. Actually, this is what I am striving for in this book, to mobilize people to engage with good ideas and information, then to question, assess, and ultimately make their own decisions. If you learn more than what you find in these pages, let me know! I, for one, am learning more every single day.

This book addresses every obstacle to family health I have encountered through my training, clinical observation, and personal experience: lack of time, money, support, and quality information. One of the reasons I wrote it was to help others to break down those barriers, as well. Yes, even the barrier of money.

This book also provides a plethora of tools by way of guides, sources, and resources that I trust and recommend for you. And let's just say, I'm a bit choosy about what I recommend.

This book doesn't only give you the science and suggestions, but also gives ample guidance as to *how* to treat everyday illnesses, improve overall health, encourage longevity, heal from chronic illness, improve mental health, and more. You will get solutions for health challenges both on the *macro* level as well as the *micro* level,



addressing solutions to questions from: “What tea can I drink to alleviate this cough?” right on through to “How can I change how my grandpa is being treated in the hospital?”

Find appendices and tear out sheets, graphs, photos, and bullet-point summaries for quick reference to the main points made in this book. These tools are designed to save you time and enable you to refer quickly to the most relevant information.

Family Health Revolution is not just another book about family health, but the definitive guide and resource for families who want concrete answers and natural strategies to not only manage, but *elevate*, their family’s health in our modern fast-paced world.

*Please note that *Family Health Revolution* is not a source for diagnosis or medical treatment, but is the opinion of the author. It is intended to empower people with information so they can make the best health decisions for themselves. It is up to each person reading this book to consult with their trusted healthcare providers when making any decisions regarding their own health or the health of their loved-ones.

With that being said, let’s dig in!

