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*In other words, I am here to empower you with information, and it is up to you to make the decisions that are right for your family.*

## Day 4 Heavy Hitters for Healing

### Lifestyle Medicine

Our bodies have evolved alongside nature since the first humans walked the earth. We are part of nature, not the boss of it. In fact, it is utterly ridiculous, futile, and to our detriment for us to believe that we can or should conquer nature for the “betterment” of the human race. Because when we focus on conquering nature, we forget the power of nature to balance itself - nature is always working to recycle and will do so long after we are but dust in the wind; and we forget the power of nature to heal - nature is always working to indiscriminately repair, not only us, but every creature and plant that resides on our planet. Microbes, viruses, funguses, and parasites compete with each other and invade our bodies, coexist or live symbiotically, sometimes living in harmony, sometimes causing illness. If the immune system is working well and is balanced, fighting off the right amount of pathogens and ridding us of dead and defective cells, while leaving our healthy tissues alone and settled enough to mitigate chronic inflammation, we will live a healthy life as long as no accident or particularly virulent infection befalls us.



Our bodies, having adapted alongside our fellow earthly critters, have built-in and innate mechanisms, processes, and programs that protect us and keep us well. There is no pill or therapy that can replicate what our bodies are designed to do. We think we know a lot, but we really only know a teeny tiny bit about how this body thing really works, and although we can try to manipulate and orchestrate and have success at some of it, we don't really know much of anything about how it all works. So, if there are ways to encourage the natural state of health our bodies were designed to have, then it is most effective to use what we know about our natural rhythms to get and stay well.

Illness and disease occur when the immune system is activated or overwhelmed. And in fact, symptoms are not the disease, itself, but our bodies telling us that something is wrong or that they are fighting something off. Symptoms are actually beneficial in that they alert us to a problem and point us in the right direction toward healing. Modern medicine and the tools this system uses are designed to turn off the symptoms, but this leaves the underlying cause to rage on, potentially causing new symptoms, further damage, and even permanent conditions. Consider covering up symptoms like turning off the fire alarm while the fire still burns. Not a great idea.

Modern medicine has been hailed to hold the answers to illness, and there have been amazing discoveries during the current medical era of the last 100 years or so, there is no doubt, but we are now facing an epidemic of chronic illness that modern medicine was not designed to address. Chronic conditions occur when the underlying cause is not uncovered, and it is in that uncovering that we can then address the condition. Currently, our toxic environments overburden our immune systems and disturb our biochemical homeostasis. In other words, we are pretty messed up due to our toxic environments, and no pill is capable of reversing or rectifying that. Our arrogance and hairbrained idea that we must conquer nature (rather than co-exist, or better yet, understand that we are merely just a part of it) led to completely misguided attempts to manipulate health rather than allow for it. There is nothing in a pill bottle that addresses chronic conditions. However, there are effective ways to reverse chronic conditions, and these "ways" are the tenets of lifestyle medicine. And what is Lifestyle Medicine? It's pretty simple, really: using lifestyle interventions to heal, prevent, and reverse modern chronic illness. And what better way for a child to recover but by doing what feels good and natural to them: eat, play, move, sleep, and rest? Lifestyle sets the stage for healing, and is sometimes even the entire performance.

Minding Our Mitochondria, the TedTalk that made Dr. Terry Wahls famous, is an account of how lifestyle medicine, targeted nutritional therapy and supplementation, and non-invasive therapies took Dr. Wahls out of her wheelchair and back into a full-on busy and



active life free of her progressive and unremitting MS diagnosis. The mitochondria are the powerhouses of the cell. Through a series of complicated chemical processes, food, water, and oxygen are turned into energy by the mitochondria. In addition to producing the energy essential for life, the mitochondria have other important functions such as “maintaining the balance between reduction and oxidation” (Achacoso, HLP Interview, p.5) which is the aging process, balancing calcium, activating vitamin D, and play a major role in controlling inflammation and DNA transcription (turning on certain genes). They are even responsible for maintaining the length of the telomeres, which are the protective caps at the ends of our DNA strands.

What is even more fascinating is that the mitochondria even communicate with each other AND the bacteria that make up the microbiome through the nervous system, endocrine system, immune system, microRNA, and secondary metabolites such as short chain fatty acids. In fact, researchers such as Dr. Zach Bush have found that, even upstream still from managing the health of the microbiome, the mitochondria are making sure that these lifeforms can communicate properly with each other through proper cellular communication. So, when we “mind” our mitochondria through healthy lifestyle and nutritional practices, we set the stage for prevention, reversal, and recovery. In fact, if the mitochondria are not healthy, there is no way we can be, either, no matter what medication or bandaid we put on our conditions.

The point here is: diet and lifestyle matter. A LOT.

## Diet

There is so much we can talk about in regards to diet: macronutrients, micronutrients, phytochemicals, and phytochemistry, which foods are the healthiest, which ones the most healing, which ones have superior nutrition, and which are just filler, but for the majority of children with chronic conditions, there are a few basic food rules that will be the most beneficial to follow to encourage recovery and healing. So, let's keep it simple:

- nutrition basics: all children need ample healthy fats, adequate protein, and quality, low-sugar, slow burning (low glycemic index) carbohydrates.

- eliminate foods that your child is reactive to: the most common food allergens are gluten-containing grains, dairy, eggs, soy, and corn (continuing to eat these foods will cause chronic inflammation)

- incorporate superfoods and herbs (get the most bang for your buck)



- eat an anti-inflammatory diet (consider eliminating grains, sugar, and often dairy)
- special diets that address specific conditions such as 0 sugar for candida overgrowth; ketogenic for seizure disorders, cancer, and Type 1 Diabetes; and GAPS for autism, Ulcerative Colitis, and mental health disorders. Most (but not all) of these “special diets” are therapeutic and not meant to be permanent, so please keep that in mind when you embark on one of them. Give them a good shot and the time necessary to work their magic, but do not feel daunted by the difficulties that can accompany such diets. Most times healing diets are not meant to be followed forever. Some things get easier, and some things just get old. Some things run their course or complete the process of serving their purpose, and some things evolve and change
- choose chemical-free, organic, non-GMO food
- choose fresh, preferably from a garden, preferably local
- choose pasture-raised, organic, free range animal protein (if you eat meat)

### **Movement and Exercise**

I am not going to get too far into the benefits of movement and exercise here for the sake of time. We all know that exercise is essential for life, as movement is life and inertia is, well, death. Our children are sitting way too much and indoors many hours a day; this is having devastating consequences namely because this lack of physical movement is not only affecting our children’s metabolic processes but also their anatomical structures, resilience, physical capabilities, intellectual capabilities, brain development, the list goes on. Most every bodily system is affected by exercise such as circulation; pulmonary capacity and oxygenation of all organs, including the brain; hormonal output; neurochemical balance; muscle tone, flexibility, structural integrity, and bone strength. Therefore, exercise leads to healthy body weight, stable blood sugar regulation, elevated mood, and stable mental health. It is an outlet and release, even for the sickest of our children. Exercise and movement can come in all forms and intensities and can be adjusted for each child’s needs from simple, gentle neurodevelopmental movement exercises to a good old sweaty soccer game. Some simple ways to get more exercise into your family’s routine:

- get outside
- organized sports or spontaneous fun/sports/active games with community and family



- move and play
- drive less, bike and walk more
- turn off the TV and the gaming console

## **Rest**

Rest is not the same as sleep (which we will get to in a minute). Rest is time to move into low gear and just be. Our children today tend to be running in all directions, some even wanting to engage in this pace of life, but is it really serving them? Where is the time to reflect, create, and enjoy the world around them? When healing, it is important to take every opportunity to mitigate stress (as illness is ALWAYS stressful for both child and parent) and return the body to a state of rest and repair. (We will talk about this a bit more in a couple of days.) But for now, know that resting is most certainly part of the foundation we are laying for your child's health recovery. Allow more space for your child to simply rest by:

- leaving your family with more unscheduled time
- spend time together playing and having fun
- providing opportunities for relaxed activities by buying art supplies, hanging at the library or buying books at the bookstore, watching the clouds or the birds, talking and listening, playing board games, or hanging on the riverbank or somewhere else in nature.

## **Sleep, Circadian Rhythm, Light and Dark**

When Deepak Chopra, spiritual coach, Ayurvedic doctor, and quantum physics enthusiast says that we are beings of light, this is not only a metaphor but a scientific truth. The body responds very strongly to the rhythms of light and dark. When the sun comes up, the pineal gland in the brain is stimulated, and signals are sent throughout the body via hormones (raising cortisol levels) that tell us it is time to get out of bed, rest time is over, and it is time to live another day. In the evening, the waning light signals that rest time is near, and the body needs to start preparing for sleep (by lowering cortisol levels), where it can rest and repair any damage that was caused throughout the day. It is NOT at this time that your children should push through that last bit of homework at the computer or start a heavy exercise routine, but when your family is to wind down, check in with



yourself, and give your minds and bodies a chance to recover from the busyness of the day. And in the morning, this cycle, called the circadian rhythm, starts over, again.

Much of your child's healing takes place while they rest and sleep, and it is very important to respect this rhythm. In fact, when your child gets a long sleep in a dark room, their metabolism changes and important hormonal and chemical processes take place. In cases where toxicity is a major contributor to health challenges and disease (which I would say is most if not all of children with chronic conditions), the role of sleep becomes even greater. It is during sleep that the glymphatic system is at work clearing out toxins and the master antioxidant and detoxifier, melatonin, is produced. And when the body cannot detoxify, the total toxic load is greater, creating further problems for kiddos who are in need of some healing.

-get outside

-eliminate blue lights at night

-use amber lights at night and full spectrum lights during the day

-reduce light pollution

-practice good sleep hygiene

### **Time In Nature, Meditation, and Contemplation**

For the sake of time and in the chance that I may be repeating myself, here, I am going to ask you to listen to me being interviewed by Kirstie Gran about Vitamin N, Creativity, Meditation, and Play and my Children's Health Summit interview with Dr. Sandy Gluckman entitled Non-Inflammatory Parenting: The Missing Link in Healing Learning, Behavior, and Mood Challenges in Children to fully explore the importance of nature as well as mind/body/brain healing. It is in the moments spent nurturing our children's spirits that we can shift their nervous systems into rest and digest: the perfect place for whole child healing.

So, here are the basics of "minding our mitochondria" and creating the foundation for healing:

Live a stress-free, anti-inflammatory life.



Get the bad stuff out of the body, mind, and physical environment.

Give your child the proper building blocks and opportunities to heal.

You might be saying: I know this. What is Carla teaching me here that I don't already know? But I ask you, are you doing it? Are you noticing the improvements that you are having when you are covering all of the basic? And if you are, great! Do NOT think that what you are doing has been for nothing if your child is still not doing well despite your tireless efforts because just imagine where your child would be if they were eating fast food and up all hours of the night on their iPads? So, keep it up, and if there is room for improvement, aim high!

Now that we have a good solid foundation in place, we can move on to building that house.

**Natural Therapies** (in addition to therapeutic diets and the rest of the lifestyle interventions)

### **Treatment Options and Categories**

The word "natural" has either been abused so openly in marketing that it no longer holds any real meaning, or it has been given a bad rap. When you mention "natural therapies," usually an insane protocol of undefined, expensive, unrealistic quackery with no scientific backing prescribed by money-grabbing snake oil salesmen is conjured in the minds of most people living in our western world. But I challenge you with a true understanding of what natural methods of health recovery actually are: targeted therapies based on science and anecdotal evidence (evidence that it is working for people in real life, not just on research rats in a lab), holistic laws of nature, and an understanding of how the human body and life, itself, works.

Natural medicine can address the usual suspects for the causes of chronic illness: toxicities and deficiencies caused by: heavy metals, chemicals, mold, viruses, bacteria, parasites, and poor lifestyle practices causing an extra burden on the immune system, chronic inflammation, GI permeability and dysbiosis, and poor mitochondrial/metabolic functioning. Natural medicine helps us to unveil our children's chronic conditions, peeling back each layer to the very causes, and hence, many solutions.



## **The Purpose and Power of Natural Therapies**

- they are not alternative but advanced, sustainable, and natural
- natural does not mean lightweight or benign - we must redefine how we conceive of the word "natural"
- support our natural state of health
- are adaptogenic: not forceful but give the body the right tools; rely on the body's own wisdom to take what it needs and leave the rest
- tend to be pleasant and enlightening (again, we are uncovering, not covering up)
- for the most part, natural therapies have no side effects, although many therapies have to be used properly, even nutrition and supplementation
- they are empowering, intuitive and reconnect people to their bodies and innate healing mechanisms
- they are a means for root cause resolution
- they are much more sustainable, pleasant and easier than hospital stays and forceful methods of symptom control
- they are most times non-invasive, although some natural therapies are not for some people, especially children

Although protocols can be created from what we know about various disease states and conditions, what we will be creating for your children are less protocols as they are individualized plans. Your child's plan will be created after you make a thorough assessments and causal factors are determined or at the very least, highly suspected. It is safe to say that chronic illnesses and conditions are attributed to "death by 1,000 cuts;" there are always multiple causal factors. It is my purpose here to help you to uncover those causes and empower you to create a holistic, sustainable, inspiring, effective healing plan for your child.

## **Refer to HFF Holistic Healing and Therapies**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19g8g4ivslrAOee3veI9t0dUIFzrpZVOyAeVZBHOs7wU/edit>



## Heavy Hitters

Categories to cover when choosing therapies for your child:

Physical (all areas of lifestyle medicine)

Emotional

Mental

Spiritual

Community

Environment

## Recommended Reading and Resources:

*30 Reasons to Avoid Fast Food Like the Plague Part 1*

<https://healthyfamilyformula.com/30-reasons-avoid-fast-food-like-plague/>

*HFF Holistic Healing and Therapies* (Google Doc)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19g8g4ivslrAOee3veI9t0dUIFzrpZVOyAeVZBHOs7wU/edit>

## CHS 4 Reference:

Dr. Sandy Gluckman: Non-Inflammatory Parenting: The Missing Link in Healing Learning, Behavior, and Mood Challenges in Children

Video

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/childrenshealthsummit.com/video4/Gluckman\\_Sandy.mp4](https://s3.amazonaws.com/childrenshealthsummit.com/video4/Gluckman_Sandy.mp4)

Audio

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/childrenshealthsummit.com/audio4/Gluckman\\_Sandy.m4a](https://s3.amazonaws.com/childrenshealthsummit.com/audio4/Gluckman_Sandy.m4a)

Carla Atherton: Vitamin N, Creativity, Meditation, and Play with interviewer Kirstie Gran

Video [https://s3.amazonaws.com/childrenshealthsummit.com/video4/Gran\\_Kirstie.mp4](https://s3.amazonaws.com/childrenshealthsummit.com/video4/Gran_Kirstie.mp4)

Audio [https://s3.amazonaws.com/childrenshealthsummit.com/audio4/Gran\\_Kirstie.m4a](https://s3.amazonaws.com/childrenshealthsummit.com/audio4/Gran_Kirstie.m4a)

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