

"No one is left behind...The world needs this book right now!"

Dr. Phyllis Books

# FAMILY HEALTH REVOLUTION

*The Definitive Approach to Elevating Your Family's Health*



*Use Lifestyle Medicine to Overcome Disease, Illness, and Discomfort,  
Demedicalize Family Health, Slow Down Fast-Paced Modern Family Life,  
Reduce Stress, and Return Your Family to the Ease of Wellness, Naturally.*

**CARLA ATHERTON**

*Foreword by Dr. Madiha Saeed*

## PRAISE

“Carla Atherton is a whistleblower on family health. In this book she gives parents every key they need to keep children healthy and thriving and to prevent future physical and mental diseases that are now so common. She does so by telling the truth on our disease producing normative food and lifestyle habits, and by giving specific tools on how to get out of the toxic community pond and into clear water. The book is a culmination of years of experience, research, and leadership; every child and their family deserve to benefit from this remarkable and urgent work.”

-Naomi Aldort, Author of, *Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves*

“I have known Carla Atherton for some time, and I love that she has combined her passion for research and helping people with her experience as a mother to create a much needed resource for families to optimize their health.”

-Jill C. Carnahan, MD ABIHM, ABoIM, IFMCP, Medical Director, Flatiron Functional Medicine

“I found Carla Atherton during the darkest time of my life. My son had just been diagnosed with Encephalitis of the Basal Ganglia after six months of horrific, exorcist-type behaviors. After frantic researching to get a diagnosis, I was in the thick of searching for treatment options. That is when Carla entered my life. The information provided to me was robust, but manageable. Her guidance was evidence-based, concrete, and filled with clear action steps, yet she had a way of making me feel seen and heard. There was work to be done, for sure, but I was empowered. Carla Atherton is one of the most knowledgeable, compassionate, determined, and capable women I know. Her work is comprehensive, sound, and enlightened. If you are on a journey of healing, seeking guidance, and searching for answers, then you have picked up the right book. Carla’s knowledge is expansive, and she shares freely. You are about to embark on the best decision you’ve ever made.”

-Heather Korbmacher, M.Ed., NBCT, Author of *What Happened to My Child*, [courageousparent.com](http://courageousparent.com)

“For years, Carla Atherton has been delivering quality content to families on the front lines of the chronic health epidemics. *Family Health Revolution* is the culmination of her work to

date, and a true accomplishment. A step by step resource for anyone seeking more robust health for their families, it has something to offer holistic newcomers and veterans alike. Carla has created a thoughtful, practical, and passionate guide that digs deep. I will be sharing *Family Health Revolution* with my clients and colleagues; and I am pretty sure she just made my own work supporting families a little bit easier. Thank you Carla!”

-Josie Nelson, Founder Integrative Health Strategies and Program Director Documenting Hope

“For many people health is considered in segments like exercise or diets. The truth is, real health is holistic because all aspects of who we are are connected. Carla gets it. This book is powerful and a must have for everyone that wants to fuel their best life by first taking care of their best gift—their body. It will reshape how you approach your health and how you support your family and change the quality of your life.”

-Nicole Telfer, Founder EmpoweredKidsTV

“This book is a huge wake-up call. Carla challenges us to take a long hard look at the current state of our own and our children’s mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and wellbeing. It is not a pretty picture. She then implores us to make choices that will change the trajectory of our lives, takes us by the hand, and teaches us how to do this, step by step and in great detail. Carla’s knowledge and her passion for showing us a better way shines through every line of this amazing book.”

-Dr. Sandy Gluckman, Founder of Parenting That Heals, Author of *Parents, Take Charge* and *Who’s in the Driver’s Seat?*, International Speaker

“Carla’s book will help you better understand your child so you can make strategic, confident parenting choices to support their health.”

-Jessica Sherman, MEd, RHN

“Carla Atherton’s *Family Health Revolution* is just in time for families waking up to the value of natural health practices! For those wanting to be more self-reliant and confident, this book is pertinent, readable, and timely. Carla sets the tone for gathering your resources and being part of the revolution that is taking place!”

-Cilla Whatcott, CCH, PhD, Producer/Director of the *Real Immunity* film series and author of *There Is a Choice*

“*Family Health Revolution* is a very readable and comprehensive approach to creating optimal health for the whole family. This Guide provides a framework for moving towards health and vitality and is full of practical steps on how you can actually do it. Bravo, Carla!”

-Lloyd Burrell, author of *EMF Practical Guide* and founder of [ElectricSense.com](http://ElectricSense.com).

“Carla Atherton is a fierce warrior mama with a goddess-like mission—to help *all* children and *all* families everywhere, excluding no race, creed, color or diagnosis. I think she’s done it! Her book includes so many modern health issues, so many kinds of kids from so many backgrounds. No one is left behind. If you read her book, which is comprehensive yet broken down in digestible chunks, you will feel empowered and want to join the movement of moms helping the world heal. The world needs this book right now!”

-Dr. Phyllis Books, author of *Reversing Dyslexia: Improving Learning and Behavior without Drugs*, and founder and teacher of Books Neural Therapy, an integrative approach to helping kids overcome dyslexia, ADHD, neuro-sensory processing disorders and other learning and behavior challenges. She is also the developer of the Home Allergy Kit

“Carla pulls from every aspect of lifestyle, medicine, nutrition, psychology, and parenting to develop her new paradigm for families. By combining common sense, ancient wisdom, and the latest research, she has produced a book that is a one-stop-shop for anyone desiring a fail-safe template for natural, stress-free health. Buy it, read it, refer to it, recommend it. You will be happy you did!”

-Patricia S. Lemer, M.Ed., NCC, author of *Outsmarting Autism*

“Carla Atherton is one of the most knowledgeable holistic health care practitioners that I know. Carla has a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of both the “roots” of the epidemic of chronic illness in our children as well as the path to recovery. Her vision for a Health Revolution is inspiring, and her approach to healing is grounded, accessible, and compassionate.”

-Beth Lambert, Executive Director, Epidemic Answers and the Documenting Hope Project and author of *A Compromised Generation*

“Carla Atherton makes health personal. Really personal. In her new book, Carla takes readers deep into the reasons why health is so personal and so important. More than a “how to” book, her latest writing helps readers discover their own “why”. Carla challenges her audience to discover their own answers, and walks them through the steps that will lead to the outcomes they have acknowledged are critical to their own happiness.”

-Reed Davis, FDNP, CNT, HHP

“My first mentor in becoming a Functional Medicine Physician over 40 years ago was Dr. George Goodheart. He would often say, ‘look with eyes that see.’ As a young buck, I didn’t really understand what he meant. Now I do. When Carla Atherton realized, ‘I have come to accept that I am not okay if the people I love are not okay,’ she created the widely successful Children’s Health Summit. And as she discovered ‘the biggest problems we are facing right now are caused by the decisions we do not know we are making,’ she knew it was time to write this book. Read this book, and YOU will ‘look with eyes that see.’”

-Dr. Tom O’Bryan, autoimmune expert, founder of thedr.com and author of *The Autoimmune Fix* and *You Can Fix Your Brain*

“Carla is passionate about starting a Family Health Revolution by empowering families to take control of their own health and that of their family from birth through to old age, and this guide covers it all. This well-researched book details how all aspects of our health have been impacted by our western lifestyles, diet, environment, and medical practices and gives practical advice on how to shift gears and build the foundations for preventing disease and reclaiming your family’s health. Carla leaves no stone left unturned as it pertains to family health and well-being. It is a must-have guide for every family bookshelf.”

-Julie Wyatt, HHP Practitioner Trainee and Family Health Revolution Advocate

“This book is a beautiful guide to empower you with trusted information as your go-to handbook. It will also inspire you to become your own advocate for you and your family. This book is a bright light shining on the path to discovery.”

-Lisa Lash, HFF Family Health Consultant and Coach

“Optimal health and wellness, who wouldn’t want that for themselves and their loved ones? The answer is that we all share that goal, but many or dare I say, most of us, are overwhelmed, confused, and frustrated. We don’t have a clue about how to get there. We don’t want a band aid, we don’t want a pill. We want our God-given right to overall health and wellness. Many of us feel defeated by the plethora of information available to us. We are drowning in a sea of information and opinions which may or may not be useful to us.

Through this book, Carla takes her many years of education, searching, researching, and interacting with the leading experts in the wellness world to create a practical source of information with ‘the best of the best,’ no nonsense, research-driven advice and strategies to achieve your optimal health and wellness. Carla takes into account your physical, spiritual, and emotional wellness. Will it be a quick fix to your health woes? Most likely not, as the road to optimal health can be long and steep. Will the pursuit be worth the effort? Absolutely, for we all know that our health and wellness are paramount to everything else in life. This precious resource has assisted me greatly in my path to optimal health and wellness. I picked my path, how about you?”

-Susan Engel, HFF Family Health Consultant and Coach

“This is a timely book with a broad message on how to stay healthy in a toxic world. Emphasis on organic whole foods, physical exercise, sleep, breathing, and posture, as well as emotional and spiritual paths to good health gives you all the information you need to be uplifted and invigorated in today’s challenging times.”

-Stephanie Seneff, Senior Research Scientist, MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory

“For years, Carla has been empowering a community of families towards true health. This book makes that wisdom available to the masses and is so timely for our new reality.”

-James Maskell, founder of The Evolution of Medicine and The Functional Forum and author of *The Community Cure*

Carla brings words of wisdom to every household, arming you with the knowledge to support current and future generations to thrive. Thank you for creating *the best* family-centric resource on health and wellbeing.”

-*Nasha Winters, ND, L.Ac., FABNO, author of The Metabolic Approach to Cancer.*

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## DEDICATION

*Of course, this book is for my children: Nicholas, Olivia, and Isabel; for Brent, for my mom and dad, sisters, brothers, extended family and friends. Of course. This book is also for this earth we call home and for all the creatures on it. This book is for you, the reader, and all the moms and dads out there making a better world for your children.*

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# FOREWORD

As a physician, the miracles of the human body never cease to amaze me. Our bodies contain a complex combination of microbes and cells, trillions of them, in fact. Millions of those cells die every minute, while 25 million new cells are produced per second. 60 thousand miles of blood vessels run through our bodies, and messages from the human brain travel along nerves up to 200 miles per hour. To keep our bodies working optimally, we are protected by a series of defense systems working around the clock to keep everything going smoothly, maintaining that beautiful balance to keep us healthy and happy. But what happens if these miraculous systems stop working appropriately? An epidemic.

We are living in a time like no other. Since many of us are unaware of what is causing the epidemic of chronic disease, we continue to put our present and future at risk through how we live, what we expose ourselves to, and what we eat. We continue on the hamster wheel of modern life, following the herd mindlessly, giving little thought to our actions and how those actions are influencing our present and our future.

We are all suffering silently. Our world is suffering. Our present is suffering. Our future is suffering. They are crying out for help, but we remain oblivious. I was there. Even though I was a family physician, I was also suffering and ran on the hamster wheel for a long time. I continued to give, give, and give paying no attention to my body until I eventually broke. I experienced one symptom after another symptom, then finally received the diagnosis of lupus.

Conventional medicine works phenomenally well for acute care but has its limits when it comes to chronic illness. For the most part, instead of addressing the root causes of chronic diseases, doctors may band aid the problem. Sometimes we need medication for symptom improvement, as you may need to dampen the fire before you control the blaze. But beyond the acute phase, beyond the meds, conventional medicine alone provides very little hope for disease resolution.

When I was first diagnosed, all I was offered were medications and told that there was nothing I could do to slow the disease down. But knowing what I knew about the capabilities of the human body, that didn't make sense to me. I continued to look for answers and discovered integrative holistic functional medicine. As a family physician, I can tell you that conventionally trained doctors are taught very little about what we can do to heal and prevent chronic disease, so functional medicine filled this very large void.

Before my awakening, my husband and I were working 80 hours a week, night and day, but we were blessed that we could check up on our children in the daycare that was right across the street from where we worked. One day after a noon conference, I walked into the infant room, and my worst nightmare unfolded. There was my daycare provider, repeatedly rocking back and forth in a rocking chair, lights dimmed. The eerie silence was broken by a child crying in the back. I ran toward the sound to find my child, my first born, the love of my life, arms and legs strapped down with a receiving blanket, pacifier in his mouth, his Winnie the Pooh blanket tied very tightly around his face. His eyes were blood shot, face red, swollen, and glistening with tears. He was suffocating almost to death. I picked him up and ran out the door, never to return.

God saved my child that day, and I made a solemn vow that I would take care of him the best that I knew how. That experience didn't only change my life forever, it also changed *me*. It created this fire within me to continue to help heal our children, to take care of our future the best that I knew how. But I realized: how could I take care of my son if I myself was falling apart? So, I decided not to let this diagnosis define me or slow me down. I just didn't yet know how. And despite being a physician, at first I felt overwhelmed, especially when I started to pay more attention to the statistics.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, about 60% of all adults in the United States have at least one noncommunicable chronic health condition, while 40% have two or more, and the numbers continue to grow at an alarming rate! Every 40 seconds someone is dying from a heart attack or suicide. Heart disease, cancer, and stroke account for more than half of all deaths each year. If we continue on the current trajectory, 1 in every 4 children born will be diagnosed with autism by 2033. 54% of American children have a diagnosed chronic health condition, with an estimated 80% by 2025. This will be the first generation of kids to have a shorter lifespan than their parents.

But unfortunately it is not just the health of our families or the economy that we should be worried about, it is also the health of our home—our planet. Our world is also suffering. Climate change is affecting our food, animal, and plant species. Studies have shown that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all animal and plant species on the planet could face extinction by 2070, and we have already lost 90% of the plant varieties and half of the livestock. We have lost 75% of the pollinator species, and there are about 400 marine dead zones around the world (as big as the size of Europe if all combined) that 500 billion people depend on for food. The UN has told us we have only about 60 harvests left. Then what?

Let's stop and think about that for a second. With chronic disease on the rise, with our present, our future, and our world suffering, what will happen to humanity? It seems easier to stick our heads in the sand and pretend everything is okay, to be oblivious to the

consequences of our everyday actions. But is it? We don't need to avoid the truth when there is so much hope. There is so much we *can* do. First we need to understand what imbalances are causing this epidemic of ill health. We must ask and answer the questions: Why are we suffering? Why is our planet suffering? Why are we out of balance and our bodies inflamed? Next we must come up with the solutions.

Carla Atherton recognizes the problem—this book is the solution. I am so honored to know Carla, as she is one of the leaders in this movement toward better health for all. A mutual friend and colleague, Beth Lambert, connected us years ago describing us as “a rainbow meeting the sunshine”. We immediately clicked and subsequently spent hours over the years talking on the phone while I nursed my youngest and she went on her long walks. And what were those conversations about? How we were going to change the world. Carla truly walks the talk; actually, she flies the talk, as her energy, enthusiasm, love, and passion for this mission is unlike anyone I have ever met. I finally found someone who was as energetic and passionate as I was about what she calls a “family health revolution”. And Carla's love and passion will inspire anyone to reach higher.

This is why this book needs to be read and implemented, and it starts with you. You can join us in saving humanity from the inside out simply by starting with your own family. Hope lies in educating ourselves; hope lies in taking care of our lives and the environment that we live in; hope lies in educating and empowering our children and in revolutionizing the minds and subsequent health of our families. Look at what you have accomplished feeling less than 100%, now imagine what we can all accomplish when we are feeling our very best, when we live our lives with purpose, love, and hope.

If my family can do it, we all can. We can do what it takes to turn the dismal statistics around. We can put our bodies and world back into balance, lower the morbidity and mortality of chronic disease, fix the food system, improve our economy, and heal our planet. It's high time for a family health revolution! Our future depends on it.

Gratefully,

Madiha Saeed, MD

HolisticMom, MD

Author of *The Holistic Rx: Your Guide to Healing Chronic Inflammation and Disease* and *Adam's Healing Adventures*

Director of Education, Documenting Hope

Medical Advisory Board, Wellness Mama

# INTRODUCTION

## **The Sky *Is* Falling**

When I think about the children’s story, *Chicken Little*, I imagine this small, intense, reactionary chicken running around exclaiming the “sky is falling!” His concern, no, his *sheer panic*, is met with rolling eyes and indifference. He’s ignored and even ridiculed while desperately trying to get the masses to look up and see the imminent danger; to believe what he says so that his community can save itself. Is Chicken Little making a big deal out of nothing, or does he see what the rest of us don’t? Is this what many progressive healthcare professionals, parents, and functional and lifestyle medicine professionals are sounding the alarm about? The health of our human population is on the rapid decline because of the choices we’re making. Are we ignoring the dangers?

These big questions are difficult to face, especially when it comes to the health of our loved ones. This is why you brave people are reading this book; you want to know what’s wrong and how we can fix it. For those who have fallen who we need to help back up.

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 epidemic numbers. 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. At the time of writing this book, it was reported that 10 percent of children in the U.S. have ADD/ADHD and 17 percent are labelled as “learning disabled”. Most schools are peanut-free zones due to the staggering number of children who have anaphylactic reactions to peanuts. Autism rates have climbed from 1 in 150 in the year 2000 to 1 in 40 in 2020. If this trend continues, more than 50 percent of our children born in the year 2033 will be diagnosed with autism. The questions we’re asking are: Why? What’s happening? And what can we do about it: for ourselves, 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 the greater world community, most say the time and effort will be worth it if they reach even one person. I don’t feel that way. I’m not writing *Family Health Revolution* to only reach you. I *want* to reach you, yes, and I’m honoured you’ve picked up this book, but I also want to reach your children, your extended families, your spouse and community. I want

to reach my own family, my own children, and my own community. I'm pretty invested in outcomes when it comes to health, and I'm not okay if the people I love aren't okay. I'm pretty sure you're not, either.

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

I wanted to say, "I know what you're 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'm pretty darn attached to my children and the outcome of good health for them.

In another exercise, we paired up and were to look our partners in the eyes and non-verbally download our stories and words of wisdom to the other. Without words, I told my partner that letting go of our children is just not possible. Although we need to be motivated by our individual passions, values, and creativity, it's okay if our children 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 that 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. I don't know if her tears were due to 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, determined, and purposeful. This was a very important message. Maybe the most important one I had to share with her.

And this is my message to you.

We know there's more to family health than the new normal of sub-optimal health we're 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'm a mother, writer, and researcher who didn't stop until I found the answers. My motivation? Some of the fallen were my own children, grandmother, friends, and many

others who narrowly escaped death or are still struggling. I asked why and dug deep into science to find causes so I could uncover 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. On those days when doubt crept in, I asked myself: *Carla, is it really that bad? Can't you just go on living the way you've always lived? Can't we just keep doing what we're doing and have that be good enough?*

You may ask those same questions. Has there ever been a time in history when humans have been truly healthy? Are we any worse off than we were before? The answer may not be “yes” in all ways but most certainly is in some. Humans once suffered from plagues and died earlier from common illnesses like influenza. A diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes was a death sentence, and infections could run rampant causing death in a very short period of time. Yet, in many places in the world, chronic illness was unheard of. Happiness was found in community and healthy living rather than therapy sessions and medications.

I ask: what are the biggest problems we face *right now*? How many of those problems exist due to “the nature of things”, and how many are caused by the decisions we make? Instead of answering those questions of myself, I ask them of you. I encourage you to look around and note what you see. Even if you don't have the stats, numbers, or studies to validate your concerns and observations, note what *you* see in *your own* family, *your own* community, *your own* backyard. Look in your schools and workplaces; in malls, hospitals, and other public spaces. What do you see? And are you okay with it? We don't need scientific studies to tell us that chronic conditions are rapidly replacing good mental, emotional, and physical health. Although the evidence is undeniable and will be explored in the pages of this book, we actually don't need studies and research to assert that fewer of us live as robust, vital, engaged, purposeful people well into old age.

What we *do* have at our fingertips is very exciting, however. If we understand holistic health, that healthy lifestyle choices are exceedingly powerful, and if we couple healthy lifestyle choices with modern acute care interventions used *when necessary*, there is an opportunity to have it all. We can have the best of *all* worlds if we know what it means to be healthy and are aware of how to attain that good health 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 multifaceted—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 take liberties at the expense of our own health and the health of our children and elders. We need to make a change for the future of our very species. I, for one, am ready to be healthy and happy. I, for one, want my children to suffer less and

enjoy life more. I'm ready for a change *for the better*. I'm ready to redefine our new normal.

Are you with me? I appeal to you, fellow parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles; are you ready to shift your sights?

Let's look up and catch the sky.

## Our Story

When we're 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 narrows our sites on a purpose.

My daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes in February 2012. I'm reluctant to talk about this event as if it's the only defining moment in my life. I certainly don't want to make my glorious, fierce daughter into a diabetes poster child. But the fact is, 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 would wake up in the morning relatively happy. There came the days of tests, 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, as if he could take it from her.

My daughter stated to me from her hospital bed: "I'm going to have this for the rest of my life," like she just knew; like some kind of wisdom had come 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 didn't. They saw what I knew we couldn't focus on at the time or we wouldn't get through—the very long road ahead.

My babe struggled. In the teen years, chronic illness is a tough row to hoe. Even with



what I know about health and diabetes, in particular, I couldn't always reach her or help her as much as I'd have liked. Sometimes I felt I couldn't reach her at all; that all of the untruths we're taught about powerlessness, medicalized health, non-medical healing methods, nutrition and other lifestyle interventions, were stronger than what her own mother and fiercest advocate was trying to teach her. It became difficult to discern whether her struggles were due to "normal" teenage angst or the roller coaster of highs and lows in both blood sugars and hormones. Teenhood is tough enough as it is, but add a chronic illness that invades your privacy and exposes every flaw and mistake, and you have one hell of a challenge. Diabetes made her, at times, prickly, alone, and angry. Everything would break apart with the slightest crunch of the eggshells I walked on. She wasn't able to be as free as a teenage girl wants to be. In so many ways, this embodied existence was a 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 their pain. I once wrote in a poem that my children are "my hearts walking outside of me." They're out in the world raw and vulnerable. They make *us* vulnerable to every heartbreak or challenge they encounter, and we want so desperately to fix them or patch them up.

I did another thing I do in situations I want to change: I spent countless hours adding certifications 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 went to conferences both online and in person. I even began to host them and speak for dozens more. I called doctors and practitioners and met the best face-to-face. I learned from podcasts, lessons, and trainings—both scholarly and others that aired for the public. I dug deep into what might have caused one of my own to fall and how to get her back up again.

I didn't reach that sunny place right away. I chased the horizon, and the sun kept setting. I felt alone, overwhelmed, and like I could never learn or know enough. Every moment that passed felt like another nail in my daughter's coffin.

I *had* to figure it out. What was the cause? What could we do about it? What I grew up believing wasn't true; a diagnosis wasn't the end, but the beginning. Still, it got worse before it got better. My other two children had their own health struggles: one with depression and autoimmunity, the other with severe anemia and GI trouble. And their father and I were falling apart, as well.

There I was, trying to make a fledgling business fly; working so much that the lines between work and life were practically non-existent; researching at least four hours a day; lecturing and running programs; homeschooling; getting three kids off to sports seven times a week;

studying and meeting deadlines; trying to stretch the little money we had to pay for testing and supplements I wasn't sure were right or working, and navigating the healthcare system with forms and healthcare visits. I was frustrated, angry, disempowered, and hopeless that anyone could or would help us. I spent limited, precious energy explaining our diet and money priorities to relatives who couldn't understand. I was spinning my wheels and was spent—emotionally and financially.

One day, I was speaking with Brenda, our insurance broker, figuring out details about our house insurance when the topic of health came up. For some serendipitous reason, I mentioned 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 surprised by the question, but told her, no, it wasn't terminal but chronic. We'd had a lot of success, but 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. 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 because 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 to live for six years while I cried on the other end of the phone. My mama heart went out to hers. Next, she told me her nephew, 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 don't know how people get through losing a child or the struggles they face every day when one of them is sick or hurting. But I *do* know. The way we get through is to support each other by listening as well as sharing our own stories. By sharing what we've learned so we can help our fallen get back up, whether that be our children, our grandparents, our parents, our friends, or us.

Brenda said she regretted one thing: that she didn't know then what she knows now. Isn't that always how it goes? *If only I had known*. I'd think this thought at times when I wracked my brain, wondering what happened to our once-carefree daughter who wasn't damaged but who had to grow up perhaps a little too soon. That thought comes less often 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. You do the 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 what we've learned, a large part of parenting is letting go and surrendering. We must not beat ourselves up about the things

we didn't know or can't control.

What *we can* do is build and act on what we *do* know and 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.

Empowerment is being able to access more support and information to make this thing we call health easier to navigate. No one comes to a space of health and happiness by doing nothing. Weight doesn't melt away without a change in diet or lifestyle. Good thoughts don't fall from the sky. You can't close your eyes and hope the pimples, depression, addiction, asthma, allergies, and chronic illness will just go away. Healthy habits don't form without action. There's no prevention without understanding the cause.

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

I cried 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 stories—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. They inspire me to join forces with families who feel lost, hopeless, and afraid, or simply want good, quality family health information. They're the reason I wrote this book.

How did I regain control? Or more accurately—how do I continually lose control but get it back 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 four-year-old, I ask many questions to naturopaths, doctors, and practitioners; to informed groups and forums (note that not all are informed, so I am very selective); and to my ever-growing list of contacts and colleagues. I'm sure I annoy a lot of people, and if they're annoyed or can't help, I ask someone else.

In the beginning, I started out asking the advice and thoughts of the brilliant people I could trust. As I learned more and wanted to do more, I ran with this information, creating projects, initiatives, and collaborative efforts *with those people* to drastically improve the situations of families who were struggling—not only with health issues, but with 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 these projects would grow up to be a health revolution. I was also still trying to figure it all out for myself at the same time as being a support to others. Yet, instead of feeling like an impostor, I realized this was the best place to be if I was to make some real change. Community isn't a hierarchy where one person is always at the top and the rest are the lowly know-nothings. Community is like the body—it's a system of moving parts, each contributing, each with a job to do, a strength, a purpose; each 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're all both students *and* teachers.

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

When I send out information by way of newsletters and other writings, I hope my words resonate and that people reading my work feel less alone. I often receive feedback confirming they do. But what I also receive is a tidal wave of support for *me*. These parents and caregivers tell *me* that *I'm* not alone! *They* get stronger, *I* get stronger; and as the saying goes, “a rising tide lifts all boats.”

These responses demonstrate how parents can navigate through our trials and tribulations—through the support of each other. With the strength I continue to gather from your candor, support and gifts of hope, I continue to create and uncover more resources for us all. For parents like you, and for mamas like Brenda.

I'm honoured and proud of what we continue to co-create in response to all of this—a game-changing approach to health for both ourselves and our children.

## Your Why

The introduction was a long way of telling you my “why”—my reasons for doing what I do. Now, I encourage you to do the same: 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. We need to think about why we do what we do, otherwise we won't do it. Humans need purpose, especially when things get a little (or a lot) difficult. Being clear about your “why” gives you strength. Sometimes it takes more effort to do what's 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? Are you done with feeling tired and stressed? Do 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 and 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 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 lengthy bucket list or just one special thing you have always wanted to do? Do you want to feel engaged, alert, alive, spry, enlightened, purposeful, creative, inspired? Perhaps 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 isn't this what you want for your family, as well?

Close your eyes. Let those thoughts and images rise within you. Let them wash over you like a fresh ocean wave.

Now, hold on to those thoughts and set your course to health.

## What Is The Healthy Family Formula?

### The Magic Formula

Everyone wants to feel good. No one wants to feel sick, be injured, or get old, 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's a fast way to feel good. There's no one magic pill, but there's a simple formula. And (are you ready?) here it is.

Information + Support = Empowered, Healthy Families

This formula may seem simple, but it's 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 shaky foundations upon which we're currently building our ill health. It all has to come down so we can rebuild it from scratch. This revolutionary formula has the potential to radically change lives, families, communities, and the world—for the *better*. It's the apex of every good thing each person needs in order to have their best chance at regaining and sustaining 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. They do so 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.
- The formula consists of returning to the wisdom of our communities, our families, and our very own bodies; 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, ease, and satiation? Yes, there will be days when we fall ill, when we have to recover, when we're injured and suffer. I want to 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.
- 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 neighbour 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, cheerleaders and gurus, poets, artists, and science writers. We need online courses and productive groups, support professionals, and a friend to talk to. Need I say more about community and support?

Again, what's the road to an empowered, healthy family? First, we need accurate, trusted information. Second, we need ample support to help us put that information into practice while actually enjoying our lives—both of which I plan to supply within these pages.

## What to Expect from This Book

This book is big and comprehensive. If you're a reader or a research geek or someone who 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 *Family Health Revolution*: cover to cover; section by section; or—if you want to cut to the chase when you have one particular condition or topic you want to refer to right away—read the relevant excerpts. This book also functions as an encyclopedia of family health information. Use the Index and the Table of Contents to guide you to the right sections.

The purpose of *Family Health Revolution* isn't to cite studies and report stats, although I do cite and report a great deal. The book also contains stories, anecdotal evidence, and my own vision of what a family health revolution looks like. *Family Health Revolution* is intended for people who want to know how to elevate their family's health. If you want more proof or evidence beyond what I provide within these pages, please do keep researching. That's what I'm striving for: to mobilize people to engage with good ideas and information, then to question, assess, and ultimately make their own decisions. If you learn more elsewhere than what you learn in these pages, let me know. I learn more every day, too.

*Family Health Revolution* addresses every obstacle to family health I've encountered through my training, clinical observation, professional experience, and personal experience: lack of time, money, support, quality information, options, empowerment, and hope. One of the reasons I wrote this book was to help others to break down those barriers.

Inside, you'll find information, sources, and resources I trust and recommend for you. These tools don't only give you the science and suggestions, but it'll also give guidance on *how* you can address everyday illnesses, improve overall health, encourage longevity, heal from chronic illness, improve mental health, and more. You'll get solutions for health challenges both on the *macro* level as well as the *micro* level, with the potential to address questions ranging from: "What tea can I drink to alleviate this cough?" to "How can I change how my grandpa is being treated in the hospital?"

Find resources and appendices at the back of this book, the Companion Guide, and in the VIP Membership Site for quick reference to and further illustrations of 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 hopefully without being overwhelmed.

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

\*Please note that *Family Health Revolution* isn't a source for diagnosis or medical treatment but is the opinion of the author. The book is intended to empower people with information so they can make the best health decisions for themselves. It's up to each reader to consult with their trusted healthcare providers, if they so choose, when making any decisions regarding their own health or the health of their loved ones.

With that being said, let's dig in!

End of Sample



*Family Health Revolution* is not just another book about family health, but an empowering, inspiring manifesto and 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.

Beautifully illustrated and brimming with resources and information about not only the *what* and *why* of family health, but also the *how*. This book answers the question many parents and caregivers are asking: "how do I reclaim my family's health?"

*"Carla pulls from every aspect of lifestyle medicine, nutrition, psychology, and parenting to develop her new paradigm for families. By combining common sense, ancient wisdom, and the latest research, she has produced a book that is a one-stop-shop for anyone desiring a fail-safe template for natural, stress-free health. Buy it, read it, refer to it, recommend it. You will be happy you did!"*

*Patricia S. Lemer, M.Ed., NCC, author of Outsmarting Autism.*

*"Carla Atherton is one of the most knowledgeable holistic health care practitioners that I know. Carla has a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of both the "roots" of the epidemic of chronic illness in our children as well as the path to recovery. Her vision for a Health Revolution is inspiring, and her approach to healing is grounded, accessible, and compassionate."*

*Beth Lambert, Executive Director, Epidemic Answers and the Documenting Hope Project and author of A Compromised Generation.*

*"This is a timely book with a broad message on how to stay healthy in a toxic world. Emphasis on organic whole*

*foods, physical exercise, sleep, breathing, and posture, as well as emotional and spiritual paths to good health gives you all the information you need to be uplifted and invigorated in today's challenging times."*

*Stephanie Seneff, Senior Research Scientist, MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory.*

*"For years, Carla has been empowering a community of families towards true health. This book makes that wisdom available to the masses and is so timely for our new reality."*

*James Maskell, founder of The Evolution of Medicine and The Functional Forum and author of The Community Cure.*

*"Carla's knowledge and her passion for showing us a better way shines through every line of this amazing book."*

*Dr. Sandy Gluckman, International Speaker, Founder of Parenting That Heals, Author of Parents, Take Charge and Who's in the Driver's Seat?*



**CARLA ATHERTON** is the Director of the Healthy Family Formula and the HFF Family Health Coach Training Academy, Host of the Children's Health Summit, proud mother of three, and family health advocate. Carla is on a revolutionary mission to empower families to transcend our new normal of ill health and chronic disease. Find her on her acreage writing, researching, and teaching or online at [www.healthyfamilyformula.com](http://www.healthyfamilyformula.com).