

# **THE** MODEL **HEALTH** **SHOW**

**EPISODE 706**

## **5 Keys to Unstoppable Family Fitness**

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**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Welcome to The Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning into me today. There are few things more impactful on our health, our happiness, and our success in life than the quality of our relationships. As a matter of fact, new data is affirming that our social connections, our social bonds, are one of the biggest determinants of our genetic expression. And not only that, we can actually pass down these alterations in our genes to future generations. A study that was recently published in the journal, *Neuropsychopharmacology*, titled Potential of Environmental Enrichment to Prevent Transgenerational Effects to Paternal Trauma, is affirming this incredible phenomenon. Essentially, getting exposed to trauma alters our genes, alters our genetic information, and then that is passed down to our offspring. It's just trying to equip them essentially for a world that is going to be ripe with those traumatic conditions, just making them better equipped, essentially, to handle it and to survive. So, this is about survival, not necessarily thriving, not necessarily happiness, but survival.

Now, on the other side, the researchers found that providing or creating an enriching environment, even with a lineage of trauma, focusing on, again, environmental enrichment, can help to reverse these traumatic genes getting passed down and start to pass on healthier, more affirmative, more, again, enriching qualities to future generations. Essentially creating generations that are healthier and more adaptable to be able to become essentially more resilient in a myriad of ways, not just one flavor of surviving trauma, but to be a healthier, more sovereign, more capable individual. So, this is something that many of us want to do because we might have come from a lineage where trauma was experienced, where difficult times were experienced, and we want to do better for our future generations. And that's what we're facing right now as a species. That's what we're tasked with as parents. And so, we want to do our best, oftentimes just try not to mess our kids up too much. But there is another level. There is the ability to not just help our kids with the basics and help them to essentially try to survive the chaos in our world today, but to create a culture, a family culture of wellness, of true health, of resilience, of connection, and being able to pass those traits on to future generations. Now, this might be a big task that we have at hand, but I believe that we can do it. And as a matter of fact, I've got the science to back up what I'm saying.

And on today's episode, we're going to be diving into five science backed keys to creating a culture of family health and wellness, to creating a culture specifically of family fitness. Now, there's this great quote that says, "families that play together, stay together," and one that's coined by yours truly, "families that train together, remain together." All right? So, creating these bonds, these social bonds intentionally that involve movement, that involve exercise, that involve perseverance, really helps to create a more dynamic connection between our

family members. And so whatever level you're at right now with your family structure, with your nuclear family, whether it's kids, our partners, friends, and family, today we're really going to dive in on how do we take control and influence the things that we can influence? And how do we let go of the uncontrollables? Because we can't necessarily influence what's happening outside of our doors. We could be upset about the way that the world might be pointing, but I promise you, we can create microenvironments, micro cultures that we carry with us into the world, and we become an example. We become a model of what's possible. And so again, that's what this episode is all about. And so, to kick things off in these five keys to family fitness, number one is to intentionally create the culture. Now, when you hear this word culture, oftentimes we don't really think about it.

We might think about certain clothes we wear, we might think about certain accents, certain things that people eat and things like that. But culture really controls our behavior, and to define culture, culture is essentially defined as the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people and communicated from one generation to the next. It's inherent that culture, again, we're passing that on automatically because the offspring are existing within that culture, and we can see the outward results, again, of different cultures. We can see how different cultures dress, how they eat, how they communicate, etcetera. But we often don't think about the underlying attitudes, the underlying values, the underlying beliefs that make those visible outcomes possible, because what we're seeing is a result of the culture. When we see the different clothes, when we see the different food choices. But it's the values behind it, it's the beliefs behind it, it's the attitudes behind it. Now, the culture that we exist in is sort of like an invisible glove. An invisible kind of guidance system that directs us towards certain things and directs us away from other things.

The culture that we're existing, we don't know that this is happening because for example, there are still cultures today on planet Earth that require physical activity in order for them to eat. All right? Hunter-gatherer tribes. The underlying belief in their society is that "If we don't move, we don't eat. If we don't hunt, we don't eat." And so, it's built into the culture. And so, there's also a fear tied to that because, "if we don't eat, if we don't move, we die." And that culture directs them towards movement, directs them towards the development of skills to help them to procure their food. And simultaneously, that hunter-gatherer tribe, their culture blocks them from the awareness that 7-Eleven exists, right? Their culture has them focused on utilizing nature and the environment that they live within in order for them to eat.

And again, their cultural construct blocks them from being aware of Wendy's chicken nuggets, or the whopper at Burger King or 7-Eleven, where if they knew it existed, maybe they might throw a spear through a hot dog like this. The hot dog isn't going to run from them. It's easier to access that food. They don't need to move as much, right? And so now, not to say that a hunter gatherer tribe can't be aware that a 7-Eleven exists, all right? It is possible. But their

culture, especially up until recently, would block that awareness and they'd be more tuned into things that are more life affirming for themselves, because their culture is going to integrate movement in order for survival. Now, this is the most important aspect of this, because if we're constantly trying to target the behaviors themselves, right? We say we want change, we want to see our kids to be more active, we want to see them eating healthfully or whatever the case might be, if we're constantly trying to target the behaviors themselves without addressing the environment and the family culture around health and fitness, we are truly doing ourselves a disservice.

Because again, the culture is guiding the behavior. The culture is enabling the behavior, the culture is blocking the awareness or the accessibility of other behaviors. It's the culture. When we change the culture, the behaviors start to change within the culture automatically. Now, the culture that I was born into was one that has gotten this term of being glorified as a food desert. Now, a food desert, that sounds too good. I don't like the term food desert, because with the term desert, I'm thinking of like, a Jodeci video. They out in the sand, in the white outfits. And this is desert. It's a vibe out here still. No, no. A food desert in reality is an environment where ultra-processed fake food is hyper exposed. It is pressed into my face every single place that I turn. It's all that I see. I become unaware that real food exists. That there's a difference between the ultra-processed foods and the real foods. So, for example, for me, I was a big... I was a fish stick boy, all right? I was a fish stick boy. And I had no idea that there was a difference between these processed fish sticks with some couple little bits of minced fish in there, but mostly this really crappy breading with like hydrogenated oils and just really crappy product and say a Mahi Mahi or wild caught salmon.

There's no distinction that one is superior to the other. That one is health affirming, and one is health detracting. I didn't know, it was just stuff that I eat. And as a matter of fact, wild caught salmon wasn't a part of my vocabulary, I didn't know that that was a thing. As a matter of fact, I called it salmon. Salmon, all right? I didn't know that salmon was a thing. And so, it's about the exposure. And so, living in a "food desert", ultra-processed foods were the thing that I was most aware of, that I had accessibility to, right? So, my breakfast most days were ultra-processed sugary cereals that are purposefully marketed towards children, which again, at this point, this should be really facing some legality of, there's just a dramatic lack of sense of ethics involved in this. When you're marketing towards little kids with these products that are absolutely geared to... There's nothing about them that is health affirming.

These products cause disease. There are obesogens in these products, clinic approved. If we're talking about just the pesticides alone, again, not to mention the abhorrent amounts of sugar, the artificial colors, these things that are oftentimes banned in other countries. And we now, we've got several studies affirming certain artificial colors exacerbating conditions like ADHD, for example. And again, we're just, it's just, you just go to the grocery store, you grab some

cereal geared towards your kid from the marketing and also for us, listen, if there's a top five list of my best food experiences growing up, cereal's going to be in the top five. All right? There's nothing quite like it. And the reality is, again, it was just a part of my makeup, is a part of my environment, part of my template. I didn't know that it was so detracting of my health though. However, now this is not to say that you can't have a bowl of cereal if you want, all right? But this is being honest about what it is. There's nothing wholesome about Honey Nut Cheerios. It's just packaged up, puffed up little circles of sugar, all right? And that's just what it is.

And so, understanding this, that this is the culture that I was born into. How do I go from there to creating a culture of wellness within my own household? How do I go from that to creating a culture of wellness for myself? And that's what we're really unpacking today because it's possible for all of us. Because when I had this revelation take place, this transformative moment, I lived in Ferguson, Missouri, all right? I was living in a food desert, and I was surrounded by ultra-processed foods, which this is not uncommon, by the way, when we're talking about these ultra-processed food, this is stretching outside of low income areas like I come from, because according to the BMJ, the British Medical Journal, about 60% of the average American's diet is ultra-processed foods. Okay?

So ultra-processed foods, again, these are fake foods. These are so processed; they no longer carry any essence of where the ingredients came from. These are products that are oftentimes incorporating many synthetic man-made ingredients, right? So, there's nothing familiar for our cells, our DNA, and their association with these things. And so, these newly invented chemical complexes interacting with our cells, again, you look at the advent of these things becoming so prevalent in our culture, 1980s, 1990s really hit their peak. And then you see boom, 1990, from 1990 to 2010, there was nearly a quadrupling in cases of diabetes in the United States. It nearly quadrupled in about a 30-to-40-year time span. How? How is that even a thing for us to just like, scratching our heads, what is the problem, there's people just they need to eat diabetic candy.

We need to have more sugar-free options. No, we have a deep dysfunction in the culture of health, in our culture of food and what we perceive as food. And so, it's critical for us to understand that our cultural influences are largely unconscious. We don't choose the culture we're born into. We don't choose the culture we're born into. We simply begin adapting to the culture we are raised within whether we realize it or not, humans are born essentially as base models with our factory settings. And then the culture we're raised in determines the accessories we're equipped with. All right? Now, we might get fully loaded. We're coming here with advantages, with perspective, with access to healthy choices that is just abundant. That's all we know. Or we can come here with, maybe we got the factory settings plus we threw a kit on there.

All right? We put the spoiler on the back, throw some Ds on it. All right? And now we're like, we're tuned into the drive through. All right? So not to say they've thrown the Ds on it, got to go to McDonald's. I'm not saying that, but I'm just saying to make a reference point, it's just going to depend on the environment of what we're going to get equipped with. And so, with that said, when you change the culture, you automatically change the attitudes, the values, the beliefs and behaviors of the people within it. Unfortunately, our society is obsessed with trying to change behaviors without addressing the underlying culture that the behavior is stemming from. And this is very much like superficially treating the symptom of a disease without addressing the underlying cause of the disease.

You can try to treat the symptom or the behavior all day, but if you don't address and change the root cause, the symptom or behavior will inevitably come roaring back. And so, this is why this is number one on these five keys to family fitness, intentionally create the culture and the steps to do this. Let's talk a little bit about that. Number one, if you want to transform your family's culture and to create a culture that is more centered around health and fitness, we want to get clear on the culture that we want to create. We don't want this to just happen by accident because that's what usually happens for us. We just show up in a culture. We imbue the culture and environment and behaviors around us and then that's that, we live out our lives and then we, if anything, we blame other people, other circumstances, but we don't really understand that the cultural construct of these things really help to bring this forward.

So, what we want to do is we can use discernment if we have come from a culture that's not necessarily health affirming, we can get contrast. We can understand exactly what we don't want, but don't focus on that. Focus on the opposite, focus on what you're pro instead of being anti-whatever. Be pro having family fitness be a part of your family's dynamic, right? So, get clear on the culture that you want to create. What does it look like? What is your healthy family culture actually look like? How does your family interact with each other? What are the things that your family is doing together? What is the schedule or the parameters or the consistency? What does that look like? We want to get clear on that culture that we want to create. And also again, we want to get clear on the culture you don't want to create, and understand, be conscious, like this is not a joke.

Be clear about what you're up against. Because in addition to 60% of the average American adult's diet being ultra-processed foods, that number is near 70% ultra-processed foods for our children in the United States right now. It's absurd. And the results, well, an analysis that was published in the peer-reviewed journal, Metabolic Syndrome and Related Disorders, determined that only 12% of American adults are metabolically healthy. You got to know what you're up against. Only 12% of American adults are metabolically healthy. And now obviously these population numbers shift a little bit but to give you some context of what that looks like,

this translates to mean about 290 million Americans are metabolically unhealthy compared to just 39 million who are.

You want to be a part of the mighty few. You want to help to create a tipping point to start to normalize health in our society again, because being healthy is abnormal and you have to know what you're up against. Culturally, that's the larger cultural container, we're creating a micro culture within our household and spreading that out. We can spread that out to other families, we get to demonstrate, because that's another thing we're going to talk about, how models and how examples really influence our behavior as well. And so, in addition to that, we are knocking on the door of about 75% of American adults being overweight or obese, 70... Three-fourths, and this is something that was largely, especially if we're talking about obesity, this was something that was extremely rare just a few decades ago, and now it's becoming normalized and we're knocking on the door within the next seven years it is, and this is according to the NIH, CDC, the list goes on and on, we're looking at about 50% of American adults being clinically obese.

And this isn't about vanity metrics, this is about obesity dramatically increasing the risk of several forms of cancer. For example, endometrial cancer, which is one of the most prevalent cancers today. There's a seven times higher risk of developing endometrial cancer when we are venturing into obesity, our risk of heart disease skyrockets, our risk of diabetes skyrockets, our risk of Alzheimer's skyrockets. This is about protecting our health and coming into this with the perspective, it's not about being a cookie cutter body size. It's about having a healthy cellular community, healthy hormone function, so that we can live our lives without pain. We can live our lives and do the things that we truly want to do. And to unlock that door, again, we've got to get honest about the larger cultural container that's likely influencing our behaviors.

And we've got to choose other than, we've got to say no, we've got to say enough is enough. I see that, I don't want that for me and my family. And as a matter of fact, as I'm building this, as I'm transforming the culture within my household, it's going to be a mandate. I'm not going to be able to do anything but share this with my example, with myself, the way that I'm being in the world. I don't even need to say another word, but when people see us, they'll see what's possible. When people see my family, they'll see what's possible. And so, what we want to do, again, get clear on the culture that you want to create. What does it look like? Does that not deserve some of your time to consider? What is the culture you want to create within your own household around health and fitness?

Get clear on the culture that you don't want as well, and really understand what you're up against. And also craft your personal environment to encourage more health and fitness to the best of your ability. All right? And emphasis on to the best of your ability. You can start



where you are with what you have right now and start to create a culture within your doors that makes health and fitness more accessible. It makes it automatic. And again, I want you to remember that it doesn't matter how things have gone historically, it doesn't matter where you're starting from with your family culture or where you came from and what you've been through. Because, if anything, I just want to affirm how many examples there are of people coming from dire circumstances and being able to overcome those things and to experience radiant health and a life of service and more joy, and most importantly, helping to defend ourselves and our family members from the things that are taking us out prematurely.

We don't have to have that be our story. And I've been working in this field for over 20 years, and as a matter of fact, the last year has been so filled with milestones and I'm just... I can't even begin to place it into words how I feel. Over 20 years of working in the field of health and fitness, we recently crossed the 10-year anniversary of The Model Health Show. We recently released the 700th episode of The Model Health Show. And now this year we're releasing my third book, the Eat Smarter Family Cookbook. And this is another resource to help our families to truly turn the situation around. This is unlike any other cookbook that's ever been created. There are over 250 scientific references in this cookbook centered around social science and how our eating behaviors influence our health outcomes. How eating together with friends and family, especially for our children, dramatically reduces the risk of obesity, eating disorders, mental health conditions, chronic diseases, the list goes on and on.

We've got the science to back it up. All under the umbrella of delicious foods, because here's the thing, this is one of the most important aspects of helping to invite other people into this mission, is for them to realize that you know what? There's actually a tremendous amount of joy that's accessible when you focus on real health and fitness. There's a tremendous amount of joy, because I'm a big foodie, I love, I love, I love food, and I'm not one of those guys, and I think that's part of the reason I've been so successful in this field is I'm not out here saying, eat to live don't live to eat. No, no. Food is an important part of our reality as humans, as a people. Food is a joy. It's meant to be enjoyed. This is what draws us to want to eat tasty things.

Now, of course, food manufacturers, food scientists have manipulated our desire to eat tasty things, absolutely. But this is inherent in us. And so, to try to beat ourselves out of enjoyment, that's counterproductive. And so there are a hundred incredible recipes, utilizing, and I also highlight over 40 of the most science backed foods that improve our metabolic health, that improve our mental health and cognition, that improve our sleep quality in utilizing these powerful foods, these delicious foods in recipes that are going to knock your socks off. And so, I want you to rush over right now to [eatsmartercookbook.com](http://eatsmartercookbook.com) and pre-order the book. Let's make this a massive bestseller. Let's help to shift the culture of health and wellness in our society today.



And also the reason that I'm sharing this official announcement with you today, I've been holding onto this, I've been working on this book for the past year, and I haven't really been doing anything outside of loving and spending time with my family, working on The Model Health Show and working on this book, writing and researching, and to finally be able to share this with you is very, very exciting. And for you, for The Model Health Show audience, when you pre-order the book right now, you are going to get free access to the Family Health and Fitness Summit. All right? This is a special event that's happening in October 2023, and you are going to get online virtual access to this summit for free and access to some of the most powerful health and wellness experts in the world sharing their insights on helping to build a family culture around health and fitness.

So, we are talking to people who actually have kids and who've figured out how to make this stuff work in a society that is so often trying to pull us away from that. And so, the event itself, the Family Health, and Fitness Summit, is a \$297 event that you get for free when you pre-order the Eat Smarter Family Cookbook. All right? So, \$297 value for free. So please rush over to [eatsmartercookbook.com](http://eatsmartercookbook.com) and pre-order your copy today. And within the summit, these health and fitness superstars... I'm just going to drop a couple of names. We've got Laila Ali, all right, undefeated, undisputed, World Boxing Champion. But she also won the television cooking show on the Food Network chopped twice, not once, but twice. And I've had the opportunity to eat with Laila several times, to have her food is so good, and she has that culture built within her family, of wellness, of food, of high-quality ingredients.

Like how do you create a culture of health and fitness, again, when the outside world can be working to pull you away from that. Especially somebody like her, she's got such a busy schedule. Some people think they are busy. Laila, she's got a full plate, no pun intended. And to find out what are her secrets, like how do you manage these things? And so, Laila Ali, we've got Dr. Will Bulsiewicz, we've got Gabby Reece, we've got Shaun T. I'm telling you; this event is going to be incredible, and you get access to it for free when you pre-order the Eat Smarter Family Cookbook. And so, you are going to hear about how to consistently eat healthy meals, even with your busy schedule, with your family, their secrets for creating a culture of health and fitness in your household, how to find the best deals for groceries, how to manage picky eaters, get kids involved in cooking, and so much more. All right?

And not only that, I'm not done yet. In addition to the free access to the Health and Fitness, the Family Health and Fitness Summit, when you pre-order the Eat Smarter Family Cookbook, you'll instantly get entered into the 25K health and fitness giveaway. During book launch week, we will be giving away over \$25,000 in health and fitness prizes to 50 winners. All right? So, you are going to get instantly entered into this incredible giveaway. Some of the things we are going to be giving away are \$500 to \$1000 in groceries from Thrive Market, \$500 prize packs from Paleo Valley and Wild Pastures, \$500 fitness equipment prize pack from Onnit, and much

more. All right? So you definitely want to take advantage of this. And a little secret, when you pre-order the book, you are instantly going to get emailed a special gift from one of these incredible companies for free.

It's going to get emailed to you. So, we are just stacking the goodness, and I'm very, very excited about this because the same thing that happened with Sleep Smarter, it changed the culture, Eat Smarter changed the culture. And with this book, this is about a rekindling of family, helping to bring back the fractured connections that have happened over the last couple of years, and to shift the culture of wellness from within our own doors, and to help our children to write new stories, new futures of real health and wellness. So again, pop over to [eatsmartercookbook.com](http://eatsmartercookbook.com). It means everything to me. And pre-order your copy and take advantage, get those special bonuses. Now, moving on from number one here on this list of five keys to Family Fitness. Number one, intentionally create the culture.

Number two is to model the behavior. This is one of the things that's synonymous with humans. Recently we've heard about the discovery of mirror neurons. Now, there's some controversy around how mirror neurons work, but we do know that our brains are simulating behaviors that we are witnessing, that we do learn a lot from mimicking and modeling the world around us. And so, we want to enable our kids to see us in action. Now, if we are talking about creating a culture of fitness within our families, we need to have our kids be able to see us do fitness, all right? To see us exercise. Because a lot of times in our culture today, exercise is something that we do away from the kids. We go to this mystical place called the gym, we come back sweatier and happy. And it's just like, where did mom go?

Like what's going on. But being able to share fitness and to allow our kids to see us in action, one of the things that we did early on, I would take my kids to the local track in our neighborhood. So high school or middle school track. I'm not talking about like the horse racetrack. That's where my pops used to take me. All right? That was our one-on-one time. He'd take me to go gamble. All right? But they had some video games. Anyways, we would go to the local track to do some sprints together. And even with my youngest son, Braden was just like, I'm talking, he could barely walk. He'd be doing all sprints. As a matter of fact, it got to the point where I couldn't stop him from doing it. Like we're doing 100-meter sprints together and I'm about to do my last set.

And I'm like, "B, just stay here. Okay, little buddy?" 'Cause also we got to wait for him 'cause it's those legs...

When we get to the end. And so, but he just followed, he had to do it. He had to participate because it's contagious. And so, for them to be able to see this, guess what kind of behaviors have gone along? Literally just maybe 5 days ago, we'll just say again, last week, my oldest son,

Braden, we were just all hanging out. We were eating and he was talking about how, he's always been the fast kid, he's the fastest kid in his school. He's just like, this is what he said. He said, "I haven't met a kid that's faster than me." I was like, "Dang, that's... Okay B, I see you," and I actually, again, I see him. I see him at basketball practice when they're doing their sprints.

Like he's at a different level with that speed. And it's just been, again, integrated into our culture to run, to run quickly. And he's picked up the trade. Same thing with my oldest son, Jordan. You know him. One of my favorite things like the last, I actually showed him the video about a week ago as well at his, one of his last track meets. And him winning the 100, him winning the 200, him winning the 400 in the same track meet. Go on boy, it's amazing. It's amazing. Now, through that, again, there's struggles, there's trials, there's tribulations, there's injuries. Prior to that, the year before, he actually broke his leg playing in his last football game of the season, his junior year. And so, he had to overcome and find a way to overcome that obstacle. Not just physically, but mentally. That was the most challenging aspect of it. And to find reward on the other side, and for him to be one of the fittest, again, he's in that top, top, top, top fraction of a percent of the population with their health and fitness in our society today. And it's not an accident. It's the culture. And so, model the behavior.

Get the kids involved, show them, participate with them. We don't always have to escape to the gym, which again, it can be an escape and we can still have that, but also do a 10-minute workout with the kids. Pop on a Shaun T workout. You don't have to do the whole thing. 'Cause Shaun T, he goes hard, all right? Or do... Like, we just went to our family vacation. And my wife and I were coming back from the gym, and we saw my two sons working out on the deck of their room and they were just doing burpees and sit ups together. And so, it's amazing. I didn't tell them to do that. They just did it together. And so, get the kids involved. You've got to make it a staple. You've got to demonstrate what can be done.

You've got to let them see what fitness can look like, even if you're in process, just engaging the kids, and also finding creative ways to make it fun. And we're going to talk more about that as well. And so, again, model the behavior. Let your kids see you doing fitness. Let your kids see you doing the yoga. Let your kids see you walking, walk with them. Let your kids see you doing the pushups and the pull-ups and the Shaun T insanity workouts. Let your kids see you doing the sprints or riding on the stationary bike. Let your kids witness you doing fitness. Number 3 on our list of 5 keys to family fitness. Number 3 is to create a spectrum of challenge levels. Create a spectrum of challenge levels. Your family members are likely diverse in their personalities, fitness levels, preferences, and more.

So, you want to lean into that, you don't want to make everything so cookie cutter because that tends to create resistance, it tends to create more turbulence. And also if you are taking away from your time where you're challenging yourself, somewhere else, at the gym, out of

sight, out of mind, and you want to bring some challenge for yourself personally into the domain where your kids can participate, you can dial up the intensity or dial up the challenge or dial it down to accommodate each of the family members. So, for example, you can dial up or dial down the challenge level of something as simple as a family walk or hike. So, for instance, you can just go all natural, so without anything, and I'm not saying butt naked, I'm not saying to go on a naked walk, that can get you arrested, or just make other people feel a kind of way, all natural is like just yourself, your clothed self, and just going on the walk. And so that can be just one level, that can also be a more casual thing. But if we wanted to dial up the challenge level for us, if we feel like we're in a different level of fitness and we're like taking the time to do this as a family, we could put on a weighted vest and go for that same walk or hike.

We can put on a weighted backpack, rucksack. We could craft or even just get a backpack and put some weight into it and tighten it close to your body and do that same walk with an added challenge of carrying 5, 10, 20 extra pounds to dial up the challenge level for yourself. Now, another way that we can alter the challenge level of something as simple as a walk or hike is that we can do part of the hike going backwards. All right? Now, I'm not talking about doing whatever trail backwards, I'm talking about literally turning our bodies around and going backwards, right? So, this is going to engage kind of the antagonist muscles of the ones that are usually firing so really helping to... I found it to be especially helpful for folks with the achilles stuff, feet, knees, ankles, but also, it's a challenge for your nervous system because your spatial awareness is really getting dialed up by you moving backwards.

Now, of course, you do this safely. You're not going like down a steep hill backwards, unless, I mean, again, at your own risky risk. But you're doing this, especially on a terrain that you can manage and really see what's in front of you, that kind of thing. That's another way you can create... But what you're going to find is that when you do that kind of stuff, even when you turn around and walk backwards, the kids are going to want to mimic that, especially little kids because they just want to mimic what their parent is doing and for a lot of times, that's the secret ingredient. Again, it's just modeling behavior.

And another way that we could dial up the challenge level for this, or even dial it down, like even something as simple as a walking stick, there's a reason that that is kind of like a story thing, that can kind of take some of the pressure off of just kind of moving through the world, and carrying a walking stick or a staff or something like that. But to dial it up, we can carry a heavy implement, so going on a walk or a hike, and you bring along a kettlebell and you carry that bad boy with you, you probably don't want to carry a super heavy one, but a lighter one, maybe it's like half a pood, all right? So, for people that know about the kettlebells, they're in the poods, that's the weights. And so, you can carry a kettlebell, my family has this array of Primal Bells that we have and so the smallest one would be the howler monkey. And that's

something, maybe again, it's just somewhere around like 10 pounds, but over time, so you're going to have to switch hands, different family members can carry it at different points. You can carry it differently rather than just holding it by your side, you can carry it up, bring it up by your shoulder, and walk around with it like that for a bit, of course you can go heavier as well.

And so now you're working your grip strength while walking. Also, your core is really going to hit those obliques, and just adding another dimension of challenge is something that could seem mundane or not as fruitful if we're trying to like really challenge ourselves, or you can carry any kind of heavy implement, a steel club or steel maces, these are other tools that we have. By the way, these Primal Bells, we get, our fitness equipment is from Onnit, and Onnit has been an incredible aspect of our family for so many years, and the things that they've provided us with, the things we've invested in with them, and getting these different pieces of equipment over time. And my whole family loves these primal bells. They just, they look cool, and they make it fun to play with them and to engage with them, so you get the steel clubs, steel maces, this helps you to increase your, implementing your family of unconventional training, not just this linear push pull thing that we train our bodies into, but more dynamic movements, so definitely check them out. That's [onnit.com/model](http://onnit.com/model), that's [O-N-N-I-T.com/model](http://O-N-N-I-T.com/model), you get 10% off all of their fitness equipment.

By the way, they also have sandbags, so if you want to bring a sandbag along, if you want to do a workout at the beach, I mean, come on. So many incredible things that we could do but definitely if you want to challenge, if you think you're about that fitness life and you want a challenge, like something that might humble you, definitely get your hands on one of their steel maces, because man, so many cool things you could do with it, but you got to train with it. You got to learn how to really utilize these muscles that you don't often use to be able to wield that powerful tool. Again, that's [onnit.com/model](http://onnit.com/model), [O-N-N-I-T.com/model](http://O-N-N-I-T.com/model). So again, number three was to create a spectrum of challenge levels. You could do this with just about anything, right? So maybe, again, your family's just doing, like my sons were doing the burpees and sit-ups, my older son can throw on a weighted vest and do those same exercises if he wants to dial up the intensity, or he could do more, do it faster, whatever the case might be, shorten the rest, there's all kinds of ways to tweak things to cater it to the different fitness levels of the family members. So, let's move on to number four on our list of five keys to family fitness.

Number four is to schedule active activities, schedule active activities. The very word activities is derived from the word that means to be active. Both words are derived from the Latin word *activus*, which means a state of being active, briskness or a liveliness. So many of our so-called activities today involve being sedentary and in front of a screen. Of course, those things are fine to include in your family's activities, but we never want to lose sight of the forms of activities that our bodies and minds need the most. And so, we need to schedule them for

especially today, oftentimes if we don't schedule it, it's not real, you got to put it on your calendar, schedule it, give it some physical substance. Taking that step of simply scheduling something really helps engage the mind to know like, okay, this thing is happening at that time. And so, what does this look like? Schedule active activities, one of our family traditions that we've created just in the last couple of years, we didn't used to do this together. We would go on occasional walks together, but it was really sporadic and random, but now we go on hikes together. I'm from...

I grew up in conditions, we didn't have a hike, I might have had some LA Gears, hiking boots, LA Gears was popping, so for those that remember LA Gears, LA Gears said, they were pretty fly, they were like street gear, but they were like hiking boots, and I had never seen a hike in my life, but I had some LA Gear boots and they had a little license plate thing that would hang off of them, a little license plate. But I didn't know what that was, so I wouldn't... I'm like, "Hiking Mount Kilimanjaro?" I don't know what a hike is. And so, essentially, most times when we're thinking about a hike, we're thinking about natural terrains of some sort or a carved out path in nature and different terrains that we're navigating, so maybe it's like some hills, maybe it's some rocky surfaces, maybe it's some kind of grassy areas, whatever the case might be, but a hike is generally in the context of different terrains and environments that are set in nature, it doesn't have to be... We can label a hike different things, but that's generally what it is. And so, one of our cycle things... We don't do this every Sunday, but at least every other Sunday, we do a family hike together, and so... But it's scheduled, it's literally on my calendar, we've got the family, weekend focus, and then alternate one is the date night, you know what I'm saying, the date weekend where I'm focused more on my one-on-one time with my wife, this has taken time to figure this stuff out.

But we know when we miss these things, especially if... When my wife and I miss a couple of those date days, this day's start getting... It is a little bit more tense in the household, and the funny thing is, my kids will be the buffer to be like, "You guys need to go out, you need time together." And it's just because we want attention, we just want attention from each other and to, again, make it a priority. So, with your family, is what we used to do before we moved to Los Angeles, when we lived in Florissant, Missouri, for example, Ferguson-Florissant, we would just take neighborhood walks. So just walk around the neighborhood, even when my youngest son was in a stroller, we just go walk together, go to the local track together is another idea. But again, we're talking about scheduling active activities, scheduling active activities, cool, yes, we go to the movies, summer blockbusters are popping, yes, we do that, yes we could play video games together, yes we could... Fill in the blank, but schedule active activities, our bodies, our minds, our genes expect that of us.

Actually, we just got back from a family vacation, and we hiked in a freaking rainforest in Hawaii, spent time at H-A-W-A-I-I, I never thought I'd go to Hawaii. When I was growing up, my



grandmother, that was the one trip that she took... Because I was living with her at the time, and she went to Hawaii and it just like... It stuck with me. She came back, she brought the seashell, you can hear the ocean, and they had the Hawaiian shore picture, and I was just like, wow... It was just a mystical, magical place I never thought that I would see personally. And especially because of the environment that I come from, people just didn't leave that environment. And so, it wasn't till I was 25 years old that I actually got onto an airplane, I would see them up in the sky, and I was just like, "There's those people, I wonder where they're going," kind of thing. And I didn't even have really a desire to leave the environment, because I felt comfortable in this environment, but little did I know that it was constricting me in my world view. And so, it's taken time over the years, and we finally figured out our path to go and experience this other culture really and to have an experience where we were hiking and having a great guy to go with us, where we're seeing food in the environment and being able to have some of the edible things along the way.

There is one thing... He termed it like an ice cream fruit essentially, it's kind of like, it's a derivative, it's in the banana family, had these large seeds, but really creamy texture on the edible fruit flesh. And so, we were just snacking on these really cool things, cliff diving, what! Jumping off these waterfalls and just like stuff I never thought that I would see and experience. And my kids just soaked it all up, and do you know what it's going to do for their template moving forward for their families, for their future. And so, it took time for me to even perceive the value of investing in getting out of this environment, but I figured out a way and that's another part that we're going to talk more about is just figuring it out and doing it from whatever level we can, because again, I was in Ferguson-Florissant, just taking my family on a walk. Start where you are with what you have and be more intentional about crafting ways to include more active activities, also active games as well is another cool thing that we can implement with our families.

And simple things like throwing the ball around, just throwing a ball around, a little catch, baseball, football, frisbee, whatever, just throwing a ball around, this is one of those iconic things, father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, it could be whatever, but it's just one of those things, throw the ball around. And in addition to that, more structured games as well, obviously, it could be ultimate frisbee, could be table tennis, aka ping pong. It could be basketball, pickleball, whatever the case might be, there's mini-structure games that you could do together as a family. And even in the context of all those things, there are a myriad of creative games you can play that offer more diversity regardless of your family's fitness levels. Because again, there's probably going to be a diversity there. For example, in the context of basketball, all of your family members might not be able to compete at basketball, but I'm pretty sure everybody at some degree can play horse, can play a game like horse where one person does a thing and you have to mimic it, you have to make the shot. And if you don't, you get a letter, right? Hopefully most people know what horse is or pig or whatever, so there's



ways with every kind of game to find a game within the game that everybody can participate in. We got frisbee golf, right? There's ultimate frisbee, more competitive.

We got Frisbee golf, we've got, I just sound like Forrest Gump on that one, frisbee golf. I know what love is, I'm sorry, shout out to Forrest Gump. Also, in addition to that, you can simply make it a competition to try to hit some form of a target, right? So even with a game like golf, that can tend to be more time intensive, energy intensive, you can get a little setup to just do some chipping in your backyard with the net, low cost net that has different little targets on it, that has different points, and just do some chipping in the backyard, obviously there's putting, there's driving ranges, there's miniature golf, there's all kinds of ways to see the game of golf. Also, obviously, there's more kind of traditional family outings as well, things like bowling, things like roller skating. You might love those things, when's the last time you did them? Schedule it, schedule it, put it on your calendar today to make sure that you are doing an active activity with your family of your choice, give yourself permission to do the things that you love, give yourself permission to do more of the things that you enjoy, and also give your family that gift of the time together and all operating under the spirit of liveliness.

As we go back to the Latin definition of *activus* where activities is coming from, a part of that meaning is liveliness, and so just a couple of other quick ideas. You can also do different activities in different elements or on different surfaces, so you could play some of these games in a swimming pool, so it's got like a little basketball hoop in the pool, or you could do sprints in the pool, it's one of the things we just did as well on the trip. My youngest son, he thinks he's so fast, he's like, I'm going to beat you. Bro, I mean, in the pool, like I'm at a whole different level, even in the pool, let alone outside the pool, but in the pool, oh, I got them water legs, I don't know. So, you could do things in the swimming pool, just obviously newer kind of inventions and surfaces, like those places that have trampolines everywhere, like Sky Zone, you could play, I remember playing dodge ball with my kids at Sky Zone and like other random families as well. And it's just, it's a different game, you got the bouncy surface and being able to play and express yourself playing on sand, doing different things on sand.

You could throw the ball around on sand, you could play volleyball on sand, or badminton, whatever the case might be. So, there's so many different activities that we can implement, but the most important thing is to schedule active activities. And by the way, even when we're traveling, one of the things that people run into is like, that's giving them, because our society is largely unhealthy, we have a society that is largely pressing ultra-processed food in our faces, it's not about not ever having any of that stuff or participating in, but it's like stacking conditions where most of the time we have healthier, higher quality snacks. And so there is the run of the mill, and I see it, some of these food bars out here are just glorified sugar bombs, are loaded with ultra-processed foods, the ingredients are terrible, but higher quality food

bars, and if you're going to do things like beef jerky or meat sticks, not that conventional stuff that has all those chemical additives and they're from really low quality sources as well.

But doing grass fed meat sticks, for example. And so all of these snacks, and even at my studio, we keep these stocked and they're from Paleo Valley. Go to [paleovalley.com/model](http://paleovalley.com/model). That's P-A-L-E-O-V-A-L-L-E-Y.com/model. You get 15% off their real food bars, incredible in their ingredients, and they're grass-fed meats sticks, they're only sourced from regenerative farms, all organic spices. They're fermented, there's no weird additives, no sugar, GMOs, none of that stuff, and again, they're delicious. So, these are things that we travel with obviously. And also, I just keep them in stock for guests and also for my team, so highly encourage you to check them out. [paleovalley.com/model](http://paleovalley.com/model) for 15% off storewide. Now, number five here on our list of these five keys to family fitness, and this is definitely the glue that holds it all together. Number five on our five keys to family fitness is to make it happen, you'll either make it happen or you will make an excuse, period. If this is important to you, you will find a way to make it work, despite objections, despite obstacles, despite circumstances, you will figure it out, you have to make it happen, you have to make it a mandate.

You have to make it something that is unbreakable, I'm going to make this happen no matter what, I'm going to figure it out, if I want to create a culture of fitness within my family, there are no excuses, I will find a way. Too much today is placed on convenience and most things that are truly transformative in our lives, that truly uplevel our lives require work, they require dedication, they require figuring things out, and so if this is important to us, we will find a way. We will figure it out just like anything else, and I really want you to hear this, we have to realize that we have to change, we have to change, I have to change. If I want to see my family culture change, it's not on them, we have to change, I have to change. We say this stuff, but in those moments when it's turbulence, we're just like, "Nah, forget Gandhi, he was on one." Be the change that you want to see in your family, be the change, and that's really where it starts, we have to model the change. We will have to develop qualities that may have been dormant or underutilized inside of us. The first step is being honest about who we are and where we are right now, and getting focused on who we want to be and where we want to be moving forward.

Now, here's the unsaid thing that I'm going to say, you know your family better than anyone, though you may not recognize this or even leverage this, you know the personalities of your family members, you know what motivates them and what engages them, the same way that you know what discourages them and disinterests them, the secret resides in giving catered attention to each family member and creating a team environment where all of the players feel acknowledged and appreciated. There are many ways to really draw out or parse out the preferences of our children, I'm just going to share a quick example with you. And one example to really find out their preferences and to get them engaged is to give them options, people

like options, some personalities are really comfortable with being told what to do, but some personalities rebel against that, some personalities want to feel like they're choosing more often.

Again, the culture creates that feeling tone, whether you're actually making the choice or not, because the culture's determining what you're choosing from. Now, we don't want to have too many choices, and looking back from the work of Barry Schwartz, the paradox of choice, too many choices can debilitate us. But giving our kids two to three choices on the family activity, for example, and allow them to decide, that brings them into the equation, that helps them to be in the driver's seat. Now, in the context of family exercise and activities, give them options for the activity, or you can give them options within the activity itself. For example, A, if you're open to doing different activities based on your child's choice, so you're going to be at their mercy, their will for what they're choosing, that's one way to go about it. For example, you can give them the option of going on a family hike or playing a structured game like pickleball as the family activity.

So, give them a couple choices, let them pick. So rather than saying, "This is what we're doing." You say, "Hey, we've got two choices on what we can do. We got this, or we got that, which one would you prefer to do? We've got this or that, which one do you want to do?" Or if you decided on the activity that you want to do already, you can give them options within the activity, for example, you've decided that it's a family hike day and you give your child two or three different options on where to go for the hike and let them decide, or the family walk, maybe at certain parks that you guys can go to for the family walk, so give them options within the thing that you predetermined so they can get involved in the choice. So again, they're feeling that they're co-creating the family experience.

And if you have multiple children, let each child have a sequential turn at choosing the activity, that's another strategy that we can use, and have a family agreement of support, respect, and appreciation for the choice the child makes when it's their turn to choose. Now, if you got multiple kids, you know that there's some politicking going on within those things, but so you want to create a family agreement, you want to create the culture to where whatever the choice is, when each child has their choice, that it's respected, it's supported and it's appreciated in advance. Now, again, if this is important to us, we have to make it happen, make it a priority, study it, study strategies, see what other parents are doing, make it consistent, and when obstacles come up, which they will, don't dwell on them, learn from them and keep moving forward.

This is such an important time. We're really at a pivotal moment as a society where, again, the majority of our citizens are, and this is according to the CDC, 60% of Americans today now have at least one chronic disease. And we can make a change in this in our lifetimes, but we've

got to make it a mandate, we've got to put a priority on our own health and fitness and create a culture within our own homes and the Eat Smarter Family Cookbook is coming along at this time to be an invaluable resource, to really help us to understand the science behind these things, but also to create a model of what's possible to demonstrate, my family is all in this book. And also under the hub, under the umbrella of delicious food and delicious food experiences and real food and higher quality ingredients and being able to enjoy one of the most important facets of being a human being on this planet, which is enjoying food with the people that we love.

So please, right now, pop over to [eat smartercookbook.com](http://eat smartercookbook.com) and pre-order your copy and get those incredible bonuses. And I really think you're going to be blown away when you head over there and check it out. Again, that's [eat smartercookbook.com](http://eat smartercookbook.com), we've got some epic masterclasses and world-class guests coming your way very, very soon. So, make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day and I'll talk with you soon.

And for more after the show, make sure to head over to [themodelhealthshow.com](http://themodelhealthshow.com). That's where you can find all of the show notes. You can find transcriptions, videos for each episode, and if you got a comment, you can leave me a comment there as well. And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome, and I appreciate that so much, and take care, I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life, thanks for tuning in.