

Dr. Jill

Your Functional Medicine Expert®
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[#83: Dr. Jill interviews Dr. Madiha Saeed, HolisticMom, MD](#)

Dr. Jill 00:13

Hey everybody, good afternoon! It is so wonderful to see you all here virtually, of course. Before I introduce my guest today, who I am super excited about, I just want to do some housekeeping. You can find all the podcasts here if you missed any. We now have over 80 episodes on iTunes, Stitcher, and wherever you listen to podcasts. I also have a YouTube channel under 'Jill Carnahan' and you can watch the live videos anytime you want or share them if you find the content helpful. And please do subscribe there, because that way you'll get notified when there are new episodes. Usually, you'll notice there's about one or two per week that go up live. That's the background.

Dr. Jill 00:51

If you want to find my blogs and free information, there are loads of things you can find on my website, JillCarnahan.com. And my retail site has products. If you find anything helpful or need to find a binder or N-acetylcysteine, which is sometimes hard to find nowadays, you can find all of that at DrJillHealth.com.

Dr. Jill 01:10

Let's get to the exciting thing, which is my guest, Dr. Madiha Saeed. She is also known as the HolisticMom. We've been in the same circles for years. I was just telling her as we started that one of my favorite things about her is the beautiful hugs and the energy that she brings. When I first met her, I remember you running up to me and saying: "Hey, Dr. Jill, it's great to meet you!" You gave me a beautiful, big hug. And I'm like: "Who is this amazing woman? I love her." Of course, we've known each other in circles and [among] friends.

Dr. Jill 01:37

I admire the work that you do, especially as we're going to dive into parenting and the healthy brains and bodies of our children. How does that all intermix? We'll dive deep into that today. But I think it's so powerful. What you've done is take the

stance, not only as a physician and a mom but in bringing this together. So often, like you said, we can silo these worlds and think, "I'm a mom in this sphere in these hours and then I'm a physician." But how do we bring it together? And how do we change the lives of children?

Dr. Jill 02:08

What's interesting about me is that I helped raise three stepchildren. They're just like my own. I love them dearly. They're all grown now. And I have a daughter who has two babies. I'm a grandmother. Most people don't know. It's always funny when I say that because, of course, I got married young and with my stepchildren, all the mix of it ends up being that I'm a very young grandma. It sounds really good! People would be like, "What's your aging secret?" because I'm a grandma. That's always fun to talk about, too.

Dr. Jill 02:36

I want to formally introduce you. She is on social media. She's known as HolisticMom, MD, and is a practicing board-certified family physician in the United States. That's the same as my training. Very similar. She's a health influencer, speaker, and author of *The Holistic Rx: Your Guide to Healing Chronic Inflammation and Disease*, the Children's Functional Medicine book series, *Adam's Healing Adventures*, and other international books empowering the world towards healthier living. And your platforms reach many people. It's just exciting to have you here. There is a lot more, and I will be sure to share your website, all of your books, and all the links wherever you listen to this. But welcome, welcome, welcome! It is good to have you here today!

Dr. Madiha Saeed 03:18

Oh my gosh, I'm incredibly honored! This is one of my dreams coming true. Thank you so much for being inspirational to many, including myself. I can't thank you enough. I'm so incredibly honored!

Dr. Jill 03:34

Thank you. Thank you. I just look at you too and see the good you're doing. I'm an energetic empath, and I can read people's energy. And like I said, you bring this most lovely, loving, vibrant energy to everything you do. I really mean that. Truly. The first time I met you, I was like: "Who is that woman? I like her." I truly want to

honor you publicly for the work you do and the energy you bring. I know that we get tired, life is crazy, we've just been through a pandemic, and it's hard to continually bring that joy and that energy. But people resonate with that. And they want to know more when you have that positive attitude. And it's not fake; it's who you are.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 04:15

No, that's literally...

Dr. Jill 04:17

It is. Tell us about your story, because I want people to get to know you. And first of all, how did you get into medicine? And then, from there, how did you get into functional medicine and these topics?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 04:29

Ooh, fun! Oh my gosh, you're getting deep. Okay, let's do this. I love it. I grew up in Naperville, Illinois. I've been here in the Chicagoland area almost all my life. I had all the same bad habits that have led most adults and children down the road to chronic health conditions. My mom, even though she was a fantastic cook—she was born and raised in Pakistan and she came here—for her, food was love. We wanted [to bring] strudels, chocolate chip cookies, and Coca-Cola to school. She'd be like, "Oh, here you go." I grew up on that. I lost all my hair. I started gaining a lot of weight and had acne, eczema, and severe digestive issues. But it's the "new normal." I kept on going on that hamster wheel.

Dr. Jill 05:22

Was that in your teen years?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 05:23

That was in junior high and high school; that was right then. I've always wanted to be a physician. My grandfather was a physician. Actually, he was a homeopath and a healer. I've always wanted to aspire to that and be like him. I never met him but from the stories, I felt I could be closer to him that way. I'm a family physician, my brother's an interventional cardiologist, and my sister's a pediatric ICU physician. We have almost every specialty [inaudible].

Dr. Jill 05:56

Wow, a family of amazing—

Dr. Madiha Saeed 05:58

We literally have a family of amazing physicians. There's a little bit more, I think, that nobody knows of, which I'll share with you. This is for your audience only. Because we were born and raised here, my dad was like: "You want to make this happen? I'll make this happen." We didn't want to be stuck. He was a CPA. He didn't want us to end up with loans, interest, or any of that. My dad quit his job. He was a CFO at American Trans Air, so we had great tickets. Every weekend, we would go out because you got those free tickets. It was an amazing job. He had been here for 40 years. And he was like: "Do you want to go? We'll go to Pakistan." I went to medical school in Pakistan only because all of us wanted to be physicians and my dad didn't want us to get stuck on that hamster wheel of loans. That's why we went to Pakistan for medical school.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 07:05

I was studying the USMLE because I knew we were going to come back. I can't live in that world. I did bring home a souvenir, my husband, so it worked out really well for me. I literally became a doctor and I got married the exact same day. Seriously, we had it all, like: [snapping fingers]. We were married, but we weren't able to live together. My dad was like: "No, because if you start living together, you're just going to get her pregnant. I sacrificed way too much!" So my dad was like: "You go stay there in Chicago, and she's going to stay here in Naperville until she gives her steps because I sacrificed way too much for her just to get pregnant and stay home." FYI: My husband did wait. It was really cute.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 07:54

My parents sacrificed so much. They dropped everything here and went there. We were separated for years. They put us all through medical school and we immediately jumped back into the system because we were studying the USMLE. We knew that that was our purpose. In that process, when I came back, residency. Me and my husband were both working 80-hour weeks. There was one chronic condition after another chronic condition. I had such digestive issues that I was popping steroid suppositories up there. I was like, "There must be a different way." Conventional medicine couldn't help me. But I continued on the hamster wheel, just

trying to keep my head above water with this newborn and trying to be a new wife, a new resident, and a new mom all at the same time.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 08:41

But then came the Hashimoto's diagnosis, then the Lupus diagnosis, then the shingles. Do you see how it was one thing after another after another? I was like, "This is ridiculous!" But I continued on the hamster wheel because that's what we were taught. Until that one day, my hamster wheel came to an abrupt stop. My husband had an afternoon conference. He said: "I have a bad feeling. Can you go check up on our 10-month-old at daycare?" I went to the daycare because, thankfully, it was attached to the hospital.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 09:17

I walked into any mother's worst nightmare. The lights were dim, and the daycare provider was rocking back and forth, back and forth in her chair. I walked in there, and the eerie silence was broken by my child's "mmm-mmm" in the back. When I went back there, I found that my 10-month-old was straddled down in a bouncer seat, his arms, and legs were tied down with the receiving blanket, and the pacifier was in his mouth. His Winnie the Pooh blanket was wrapped so tightly around his face that he couldn't breathe—eyes bloodshot and face swollen. I immediately picked him up and ran out.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 09:46

That day I was like, "God, you saved my child!" Seriously, there would have been no way that I would have gone. And I didn't even have the gut inclination; it was my husband. You think, "Mother's instinct." No, I was just chit-chatting. I was like: "God, you saved my blessing. You saved this child. I promise today that I will take care of these kids the best that I know how." But then I was like: "Wait, wait, hold back. I'm a family physician and I'm falling apart." I knew one of these diseases could eventually kill me.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 10:23

We've seen lupus patients and it's miserable. I started researching and searching. I was very thankful that one of the doctors that I worked with, an OBGYN, Dr. Uthman Cavallo, introduced me to the idea of integrative-functional-holistic medicine even during my residency. I graduated in 2010. He brought me on board

and he taught me. In his practice, he had me, an OBGYN, an internist, an exercise physiologist, a nutritionist, a counselor, a chiropractor, and a massage therapist all under one roof. And here, as a resident, I am to be brought into this! Oh, what I didn't tell you is that I was certified in homeopathy during my residency.

Dr. Jill 11:09

Which is your grandfather's [inaudible].

Dr. Madiha Saeed 11:11

I went full circle. But I did that in residency and I started applying it to some of my patients in residency. And I was like: "Wait, this is so cool! This is working on people with [things] like 50 years of psoriasis. It is working here. What else did medicine not teach me?" So I made this my mission and my passion. That's when I started HolisticMom, MD. I started researching, trying to educate myself, and listening to experts like yourself. And that's why you guys are such heroes to me. I really feel that that just continues to add fuel to my flame that was already going on.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 11:51

With everything that I've learned, I was trying to figure out, "How can I integrate that with my children?" despite living crazy lives. I feed a family of eight on a daily basis. On the weekends, it's like 20. The way I eat is what I feed them. I had been studying parenting because I made this promise. I promised, "I'm going to take care of these kids." I was studying parenting because that's what you would do. But then, when I found integrative-holistic-functional medicine, when you combine both worlds, it blew my mind. So this book is 13 years in the making. I was trying to combine all the research that I've learned into one easy source. That is my story. Unconditional love got me here. That's why I just want to spread this message to the world and show people [inaudible].

Dr. Jill 12:42

Aw, you keep making me want to cry. It's no wonder I love your energy and what you do because, truly, love is at the root. And that divine calling—I have had many in my life too, where it's like God uses some circumstances that are horrendous and brutal. Thank goodness, I survived cancer, and your 10-month-old survived this situation. And all of these things are massive catalysts for our passion. It's probably why, when we run and say hello, we have this energy because there's a deeper

reason and a purpose behind our mission, isn't there? I feel so much the same as you because it goes much deeper. And you mentioned that the most important thing is unconditional love. That's at the core of all healing that we do in any way, shape, or form. I believe with all my heart, and I'm sure you do too, that no healing can take place without the setting of some sort of love foundation.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 13:37

Absolutely. Unfortunately, that's the one piece of the puzzle in conventional medicine—there's multiple—that is absent. We weren't allowed to get attached to the patients, and that's where it didn't make sense to me. I was like, "No, but I love my patients." I was known as the hug doctor. I would hug. That's how I connected. And I feel you're right—healing does come from there.

Dr. Jill 14:02

Yes. In fact, nowadays, with the pandemic—of course, we're still masked in public areas and all that—I always ask patients: "Can I touch you? Can I hug you?" But now I ask. It's interesting because I naturally want to give a hug. Wow, what a story and how powerful. It's clear that with what you do, how you speak, and how you show up in the world, there's something greater behind it. I'm not surprised at all because I can feel that from you. So you've taken it and obviously, you've written this book.

Dr. Jill 14:31

Let's talk a little bit about, first of all: How is it to be a full-time physician? You're not just a physician but also an entrepreneur like me. We run multiple businesses. Then, you have your family and your children. How do you find balance? What have you incorporated into your life personally? Because day to day we learn, don't we?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 14:50

Absolutely. I'm not perfect.

Dr. Jill 14:53

Me neither.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 14:54

Yes, exactly. And we do the best we can. And I don't think long-term. I'm like, "What can I do today to be the healthiest I can possibly be?" Some days are good, better than others, but you do the best you can. Because I have this mission, this drive,

this passion, and a divine calling, I feel that God just opens up some of that time for you. I'm very blessed. I've been experimenting on four lab animals—four children [laughter]—and I was trying to use everything that I've learned for integrative holistic functional medicine. Because their brains are working and you can talk to them like real human beings, that decreases a lot of stress for a mom or working woman—when the bodies of the people around them are able to function appropriately. There are fewer temper tantrums. There's no fighting. They're able to coordinate with you. You can just talk to them like real human beings. That's one key piece that I've noticed. But the other thing—

Dr. Jill 16:01

How old are they? Tell us quickly [inaudible] what your babies are.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 16:03

Yes. [The ages are]: 14 (he just turned 14 a couple of days ago), 10, 8, and 6. I have four boys. They help me in my mission, which is really cool.

Dr. Jill 16:20

I saw the children's book, and I think there's a story there.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 16:25

There is. There are children's books that they help me with. They started a podcast called the *Holistic Kids Show*, which we can't wait to have you on. They help me. They understand. But where all that comes from is self-care. We have to, as moms, push away the thoughts that "We have to first take care of everybody else besides..." No, they can learn. And once you prioritize that, I get my exercise, I get my meditation, I get my prayer, and I'm able to take my Epsom salt baths and [be out in] nature and things like that—things that are [related to] self-care that I need. But the thing is, when I'm in nature, sometimes I drag them along with me. When you are able to fill that cup and only give what is out of the saucer—I love that quote—it does make a big difference. And that's how I'm able to do it.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 17:23

I'm very honored now. It wasn't always like this, but because I've been feeding everybody the way that I should... And my in-laws live with me; they're from a totally different world. They're from Pakistan. We even started a Facebook page, *Holistic Urdu, MD*, which literally grew. We got millions of views over the course of

the last couple of months. So they're helping me. The kids are working now. And I'm only feeding everybody in the house what I would feed myself. It's about self-care and trying to get everybody on board the best we can. But self-care is really where it's at. And the gratitude.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 18:09

I do live a life of gratitude. We start our mornings with gratitude. We end our days with gratitude. I'm grateful. As I walk, the air that I breathe [and practice] mindfulness, I'm just very, very thankful. Trying to keep our subconscious, instead of thinking negatively all the time, thinking positively, is my biggest secret.

Dr. Jill 18:29

And modeling it obviously for your children. That's so huge because it's easy to be negative or think about the worst. And just to model that for your children—I just love that. I didn't ask you about what birth order you were in with your siblings. Were you the middle or the oldest? The oldest? Of course. I thought so. I totally get it. And thank you for sharing your story. First of all, [you had] amazing parents. I just want to honor them. That is unbelievable what they have done for you and your siblings.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 19:01

Absolutely. That's why I'm able to do some of the work that I'm doing. I have no debt. My siblings have no debt. My husband has no debt. Therefore, we're able to sort of get out of that hamster wheel and think outside the box. Because of their unconditional love and all their sacrifices, I'm able to spread this message to help others.

Dr. Jill 19:25

It's so unbelievable. You're right. Even a lot of our patients and listeners may not know that most physicians our age in these decades have massive debts of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Fortunately, kind of like you, I had some scholarships, opportunities, and different things, and I was able to graduate debt-free. It's exactly the same thing. I just thank God for that because I know it's His doing. But it's such an unbelievable thing. Many of our colleagues make decisions based on: "I've got to work for this hospital because I'll get" a certain salary or paycheck. They're miserable and they're not happy. But they've got this

debt load that enslaves them. Thank goodness, you and I do have a little bit of freedom there.

Dr. Jill 20:06

Let's talk about children growing up, brains, inflammation, and what we're seeing. My experience is that—you've reflected this, so I want to hear your opinion—so many of our children are suffering more and more. I don't have the statistics, but the numbers of children, even under five, that are diagnosed with things like depression or bipolar... How do you even decide a four-year-old has that? That is bizarre to me. But the basis is diet, environmental influence, toxicity, and infections that are contributing to inflammation of the brain. Let's talk a little bit about children's brains. What do they need? What have you seen? Let's dive into that.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 20:46

Unfortunately, we, as humanity, are getting sicker. Our world is getting sicker. The United Nations says we have 60 harvests left of soil that can be used because we've destroyed it. But what's also concerning is that chronic disease has quadrupled among children since the 1960s. In 1994, one in eight children had a chronic health condition. Currently, the statistic is 54%, so it's one in every two American children. And they say that if we continue with the current trajectory, 80% of American children will have a diagnosed chronic health condition by 2025. Just think about that. That's craziness. And now, with this pandemic, things can even accelerate. CNN came out with a report saying that in this pandemic alone, diabetes in children has doubled. Diabetes in children has doubled! Now, how crazy is that?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 21:46

One in six American children has at least one neurodevelopmental disorder like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, specific learning disorders, communication, or sensory processing disorders. ADHD has increased by 167%. Just this past year alone, they said that there's been a 20% increase in suicide and a 40% increase in behavioral issues. I'm like: "What's going on? Why are our children sick?" We're functional medicine physicians. We've got to ask why. What is the root cause here?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 22:23

And it's these imbalanced lifestyles. Our children are living imbalanced lifestyles. We're living imbalanced lifestyles. What our child wants to wear, what they choose to eat, the decisions that they make, and how they feel are all dictated by their

brain. If the child is constantly making the wrong decisions, it makes our parenting a lot harder and destroys the world and their health. But if the child is constantly making the right decision, it makes our lives, the planet, and their health a lot easier and healthier. Many parenting books have been written in the past, but they don't take into account the sicker children that we have today. You and I, when we were growing up... I don't know of anybody my age who has autism.

Dr. Jill 23:16

Yes, you're right. In my school class, there was no one.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 23:19

There was nobody. So there's a problem here. Our brains are messed up. Our kids' brains are getting sicker and sicker. Specifically, if we are trying to get this generation healthier, we've got to improve their lifestyles. We've got to improve their brain function. There's an entire science called neuroeconomics, which is an interdisciplinary field that seeks to explain human decision-making. There are two main pieces: The prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. The prefrontal cortex is the more developed part of the brain—it's responsible for rational decision-making skills, pros versus cons, and then being able to look at the entire picture and make a rational decision—while the amygdala is a reactive part of the brain's primitive fight and flight [response]. You need both of those pieces to work appropriately if you want your brain to work appropriately and to use a full brain to make a logical decision.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 24:18

But what's going on today? Our children's lifestyles are completely out of balance, despite warnings of unhealthy diets and obesity. We're eating more fast food than ever before, with increased junk food and a limited diet variety that's impacting our gut microbiome. There's a lack of sleep, a lack of nature, a lack of exercise and play, a negative social environment, and increased exposure to toxins inside and outside the home, all contributing to this imbalanced child and even inflammation. Chronic inflammation hijacks your child's brain. Our kids' brains have been hijacked—no, not by aliens, but by their imbalanced lifestyles.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 24:56

Studies have shown that inflammation is found to decrease the strength between the prefrontal cortex and amygdala, leading to a child who's unable to reuse the

entire brain to make a logical decision. They're angrier, they're more violent, and they have poorer social relationships with an us versus you mentality. We know that science has proven that inflammation and behavior are intimately connected.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 25:29

Researchers at Harvard and Columbia looked at a group of 4,000 children. Researchers found that with children of the age of eight who had emotional and behavioral problems, they checked their blood at the age of ten and they had higher levels of two proteins: CRP, the C-reactive protein, and interleukin-6, which is a proinflammatory cytokine. They showed that these children had inflammation. That was then associated with inflammation in adulthood, showing a potential childhood origin of adult inflammatory risk.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 26:02

Even prenatal inflammation led to behavioral problems. Researchers found that brain networks in babies can reflect the degree of inflammation their mothers were experiencing, even during pregnancy. When the child of a mother who had higher interleukin-6 levels during pregnancies was assessed for working memory at the age of two, they scored less.

Dr. Jill 26:26

Wow. It's no surprise, but it's so important that people know this. I always love the moms who maybe have one child or are getting ready to get pregnant in that preconception counseling because there's this window where if a mother wants to do some things for her health, that can make a massive difference in the lives of her children. That's fascinating. Do you do preconception counseling?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 26:50

Absolutely. There's so much that you can do at that stage. Even those people who are dealing with infertility who just want to get pregnant don't recognize that, yes, you can get pregnant—maybe with IVF and all these things—but your chances of having a sicker baby are a little bit higher because you're inflamed or have insulin resistance. Therefore, the child can also have problems. It's really important to start getting them, even when they're just thinking about getting pregnant, to work on themselves first. If they're unable to, [they should] recognize that as, "This is time for me to work on myself because once I'm healthier, then I'll have a healthier baby."

Dr. Jill 27:34

Absolutely. Say a mother's coming in, and she says: "In the next six to 12 months, I want to have a baby." What are some of the things that we could do as physicians that our listeners might want to know about preconception that would be helpful?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 27:48

The same thing we all talk about in functional medicine: Your digestive health, detoxification, and the four S's—stress, sleep, social and spiritual health. If you can start to work on all of these pieces first on your own, it will be a lot easier once a child comes into the picture. And even when they come into the picture, it won't be too frustrating, [like], "Oh my gosh, where am I going to start?" We know food is medicine. And then detoxification. Working on your own health overall is really important.

Dr. Jill 28:22

Going back to self-care, right?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 28:25

Yes, back to the self-care. Absolutely.

Dr. Jill 28:27

Go a little bit more slowly with the four S's. I like that a lot. Just briefly talk about each one, because I think listeners would love to hear that.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 28:38

Yes. Stress, sleep, and social and spiritual health. Right now, all of us are living in a world of chronic stress, lack of nature, lack of exercise, constant negativity with our minds constantly going, inability to sleep, and negative social relationships. That's all destroying the gut microbiome. And most importantly, chronic stress kills the brain cells and the prefrontal cortex and makes them grow in the amygdala. If we can start to incorporate those stress management techniques into our daily routine, that's going to help tremendously. It's really important, especially with that gratitude piece. We know nature heals [along with] mindfulness and meditation, but gratitude is super important.

Dr. Jill 29:33

I couldn't agree more. It's like the number-one thing, right?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 29:37

Where I start with every one of my patients is gratitude. Science has proven over and over and over that gratitude and optimism strengthen the connection between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex, improving overall health and well-being. In this world of negativity, it's even more critical to train our subconscious to be more positive. A practical way I do that is, immediately when you wake up in the morning, say 10 things that you're thankful for. It helps to change our subconscious from thinking negatively to thinking positively. And that's what I've done with the kids, too. You can do that on your own, like what you were talking about with preconception, if they're thinking about having children. Instill some of these things into your life because your child will follow in your footsteps. If this is part of your routine, it's easier to get this child involved in your routine.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 30:28

Plus, studies have also shown the benefits of stress, decreasing inflammatory markers, turning genes on and off, and [increasing] heart rate variability. There's much there. When you live a life of frustration, your heart rate variability is all over the place. But when you live a life of appreciation, it's a nice sign wave.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 30:50

Gratitude. And make sure you keep people around you who are going to lift you up, not drag you down. Make sure you optimize your sleep, your stress management with meditation, mindfulness, yoga, going out in nature, and, obviously, your food and detoxification. Simple things like that.

Dr. Jill 31:09

Yes. Real quick. I have a question, as you're talking about that. One thing I think about that is affecting our children is devices and social media. And there's a place for those. I'm not against everything. But what we know to be true from the science is that it does affect dopamine. It does affect the amygdala and it trains us to have the next hit of dopamine. Every app on there that's successful has a built-in mechanism to get the dopamine hit, which is like an alert—which is why I turn off all the alerts on my phone, except for messages or phone calls. Even then, a lot of times I put it on silence. That has been, in the last two, three, maybe five years, one of the best things ever because I don't get dings.

Dr. Jill 31:47

When we get that ding to check Instagram, social media, or even messages, it's a training like Pavlov's response. And there's a dopamine hit: "Oh, there's a message from so-and-so." And we get into this loop and we get used to being hit by that. I think poor children are 10 times worse with the amount of time they are on devices and phones. What do you do with your family and children to allow them to be in the world and not totally outside of it and yet not have that? Any tips or tricks for children with devices?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 32:18

Yes, absolutely. We know that when we're dealing with stresses, we are trying to get those dopamine hits. And unfortunately, kids' and teenagers' brains have more dopamine receptors, so they're more easily addicted to these now pleasurable responses. What I do in my own house is just like I do with everything else: I try to role model this type of behavior. I'm role-modeling this and talking to them about it. What I sort of coin in this book is all about holistic parenting. We are mind, body, and soul, our children are mind, body, and soul. Holistic parenting can help nurture a child's mind, body, and soul from the inside out with the skills that they need for emotional intelligence, enduring deep friendships and making correct decisions, managing stress, and being able to be resilient throughout life—no matter what life throws at you, including with these social devices.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 33:28

What I try to do is raise mindful children. Mindfulness allows us to see our internal and external worlds clearly, showing us how best to respond and be fully aware at multiple different levels of perception all at once. It's all about educating and empowering our children to be more mindful of their bodies, their minds, their emotions, their social lives, and their environment. That does come into play when we're talking about devices. Are we trying to hit this device because we're stressed and now we are just trying to get these dopamine hits?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 34:04

If I can incorporate a stress management technique into my child's daily routine and have them understand what their body feels like when it's in balance, recognize when it's starting to go off balance, and correct it completely on their own without

you bribing them, it is so powerful. For example, I walked in on my 10-year-old one day and he was meditating on his own. I asked him: "I saw you meditating. That's awesome. What was going on?" And he said: "Oh, mama, I just felt a little agitated and stressed because I have a test," and he had a lot going on. "I wanted to balance my nervous system." I'm like, "What?"

Dr. Madiha Saeed 34:55

The same thing with my seven-year-old. I walked down and he was eating a bowl of sauerkraut. I was like, "Why are you eating a bowl of sauerkraut?" He was like: "Mama, I woke up this morning, and my tummy—I felt a little agitated. I think it was from the organic sugar that I had at Nana's house yesterday. I didn't feel good after that, so I came and I wanted to keep the bugs in my belly happy. Therefore, I'm eating the sauerkraut because if my friends—they call them their friends—"feel better, I'll feel better." And I was like, "What?" They're seeing me put my body back into balance.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 35:34

It's the same with social media. You want them to create a healthy balance. You can give the child all the autonomy in the world, but if their brains are unable to make those correct decisions because their prefrontal cortex and the amygdala are disconnected, then they're going to be addicted. They're not going to be able to recognize when things are too much or too little and how it's making them feel. So it's really [about] starting there.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 36:04

Because I've been doing this for a while, now my kids understand what it feels like to be off balance. We sit down and discuss. He's 14 years old. Right now, they don't have any iPhones or iPads. They do have a television that they can watch. We have a set time for that—whatever they want to watch together. My oldest is now trying to make YouTube channels and doing *The Holistic Kids Show*. They're creating videos on food and lifestyle. So yes, they're a little bit more advanced. They help me write books.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 36:43

You really want to have this conversation—an open, honest conversation with the children on what the limits are—and then have real-life consequences. And just

keep it transparent. When I'm on my device, I'm able to tell them, "This is what I'm doing on here." I'm transparent. They're transparent. Because they know that sleep and all these things are important, they're able to prioritize them. They have a set time when they're using the television. And they're so funny. When this last pandemic hit, every one of them had blue light [blocking] glasses on. Even now, they do that. It's so cool.

Dr. Jill 37:25

I love it! Oh, my gosh. What you're saying is that you give them a lot of autonomy, but you still have structure. I think there are a couple of views on this. You can have all the autonomy of the world, do whatever you want, and have no rules or structure. But children feel safer when they have some boundaries. And it doesn't have to be restrictive. But then, at the same time, you're modeling and you're teaching. Your stories about your seven and ten-year-old—I love that!

Dr. Jill 37:56

And it's the same way with patients, isn't it? When they come overwhelmed and don't know how food is making them feel, I always feel like one of the first things I can do is help them reconnect with their food and understand what food makes them feel good and what food makes them feel bad. And when they own that, you don't have to tell them what to eat. They can decide. And they might decide to eat something like gluten, dairy, or sugar that makes them feel poorly. But then they decide, "Is it worth it?" But it's their decision, not ours. And the more—just like your children—that we can connect them to how social media, television, or nature (for a good fit) make them feel, the more they can decide.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 38:34

And that's where mindfulness comes in. Absolutely. That's where the mindfulness comes in, like, "What do I want to do?" And there is an entire world called discipline. Discipline means to teach in Latin. It's this range of ways a parent can interact and teach their child to understand what is expected of them, so the child is then able to make a good, thought-out decision. Discipline is like a set of tools and guidelines that help set a child up to allow their prefrontal cortex... Remember, their brains are not fully developed. Kids need that structure. I'm so glad you brought that up. But then, we come up with those rules together. I want a rule modeling these types of behaviors.

Dr. Jill 39:17

I love that. You're basically talking to [each of] them as an adult and saying, "What would make sense to you if we had this consequence?" That's beautiful! I love it!

Dr. Madiha Saeed 39:28

Treat [each of] them like an adult. I don't think we give kids enough credit. My kids know when they take a bite of food exactly what happens to their gut, what happens to their insulin levels, and how it makes them feel. They're able to gauge it. They read the ingredients. They're able to look at the ingredients and see and they know exactly what happens. We've got to give them enough credit and treat them like adults. They can do video games and all these other complex things; they can figure it out [inaudible].

Dr. Jill 39:57

I love that. I love it because I know some adults, colleagues, and people who, maybe as children, had zero structure. It's traumatic. So there's this happy medium, because that structure gives the feeling of safety and protection. It's just like you said: Talking to them about what would make sense and the consequences, engaging them. At its core, you're showing them respect. "You might be a younger version of an adult, but you are still someone that I respect. And I want to hear what you have to say and what you think about this." That's beautiful.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 40:32

Let's say there's a problem. Instead of looking at it as, "Oh my God, this is terrible [and] we have to fight this"—this is just like what we do with chronic health conditions; we don't want to ever fight anything—we're going to look to see where your child is out of balance. Are they lonely? [Do they need] attention? How are their nutrition, their stress, their sleep, and their gratitude? All of those things can empower a person, so they don't just feel like they're totally out of control and have to leave everything up to chance.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 41:02

There's so much that we can do as parents because a child is born into this world with millions of different cells but very limited connections. Every touch, every hug, every conversation, the food that you put on your body, the stressors, their sleep, and their social and spiritual health have the power to mold our children's brains and bodies for the better. Your family's daily routine—talking to them like adults and respecting them, just like we do with anyone else—can do wonders. It puts a lot

of power back in their hands, saying: "If I feel like this, this is what I can do to help. I'm back in charge of my own health."

Dr. Jill 41:47

You're right. You empower them because, all of a sudden, they know, "I feel bad." And many children are like, "I feel bad and I don't know what to do," or they don't even know how to put that into words. But when you're talking to them, not only can they identify what they're feeling, but then they have choices. They may choose one time something that helps them and another time something that doesn't, but each time they learn: "This worked last time" or "This didn't work last time."

Dr. Madiha Saeed 42:09

It's a learning curve. We're all learning. You're going to make mistakes, and you're going to get back on. If we continue to have these conversations—just like we would with our patients—with our children, they'll pick it up.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 42:24

And now it's so cute! On their podcast, *The Holistic Kids Show*, they're interviewing Dr. Terry Wahls. Can you imagine having a conversation with Dr. Terry Wahls? When they first started, she was like, "I would love to do that." They're having an intellectual conversation. Even my 12 [year-old]—at that time he was 12 years old—was pulling out studies. I was like: "Wait, wait—that wasn't in the notes that we talked about." [laughter] He's engaging. And they pick it up subconsciously.

Dr. Jill 42:58

That is unbelievable! I can't wait to start watching. Where can people find you? Tell us more about your book, because I'll include all of the links. But I want to make sure people can find you and your information if they want healthy families. Yes, there we go. Tell us all about this.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 43:17

This is *The Holistic RX for Kids: Parenting Healthy Brains and Bodies in a Changing World*. It really dives into the science and the practicality because I live this lifestyle. It's my 13 years of experience, all into one—medical and personal. It first dives into what's going on with our children today and what we can do with holistic parenting to optimize your child's life at any age with the tools that they need to live a healthy lifestyle. I even talk about HolisticMom, MD's functional-integrative-holistic

medicine approach to your child's chronic health condition, recipes that work in my house, and well-child checks. Do you remember well-child checks in residency? We had no idea how to raise kids. We just gave this paper with milestones.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 44:18

In residency, I put this together on how to optimize a child's brain and body—emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual—at each stage of development. That stage of development, especially the first three years, is really important, which is from ages two months to three years. I have those well-child check sheets in here, along with resources, recipes, and so much more. It's endorsed by all of these amazing human beings.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 44:50

I have the children's book series. The first one that I did was *Adam's Healing Adventures: From Sickness to Health*. That goes through digestive health, detoxification, stress, sleep, and social and spiritual health. But the next one needs to be of all the foods the kids can eat. It's for ages 6–11. It's not a book just like, "Oh, color red!" I wanted to give them the information they could use and empower them at each stage. It has all the different colors of our foods. We have our reds and the oranges and the yellows and the greens. Adam is talking about all the different types of foods, the different colors of the rainbow, and the benefits. And then my next one's going to be on gratitude.

Dr. Jill 45:51

Oh, good. I love it. And what perfect timing! It sounds like your children have helped you with the books.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 46:00

My seven-year-old sat in my lap and wrote this entire book out. And then I filled in the blanks. He's seven years old. But the outline: "Mama, Adam was eating too much sugar, and then he was agitated and irritable. And now, instead of sugar, his friends are going to introduce him to healthier, prettier, delicious, nutritious options that are sweet and nutritious." They helped me with it. And that's why we've turned my mission into our mission.

Dr. Jill 46:34

That's the best thing about this: You've got your whole family involved. And where

can we find you? I'm sure that this is on your website and on Amazon too. But what is your website?

Dr. Madiha Saeed 46:43

HolisticMomMD.com.

Dr. Jill 46:45

Perfect. Awesome. As I expected, this was absolutely delightful. And thank you for your time. I will be sure to share the links. And hopefully, we can see each other in person at a conference one of these days soon.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 46:57

Yes, absolutely! Definitely. And then I've got to invite you over. You've got to have dinner at my house: Lunch, brunch [inaudible].

Dr. Jill 47:05

Next time I'm in Chicago, I'm over.

Dr. Madiha Saeed 47:07

Yes, please! I love it! It's literally my love language.

Dr. Jill 47:12

I would be delighted to meet your family. Well, have a great evening, and thank you so much for your time!

Dr. Madiha Saeed 47:18

Oh, my God, it's my honor and my pleasure. Thank you for all the work that you do!