

Jonathan Hunsaker: Welcome, everyone, to another episode of Empowering You Organically. I'm your host, Jonathan Hunsaker, joined by my cohost, TeriAnn Trevenen.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Hey, everyone.

Jonathan Hunsaker: We have a very special guest today. This is actually one of our Inspired Health Journeys. And we have Suzie Skougard with us. Thank you, Suzie, for joining us.

Suzie Skougard: Thank you for having me.

Jonathan Hunsaker: This is going to be an awesome podcast. I'm just reading your bio, reading your history. I'm just super excited to share your story with the world. TeriAnn, do you want to read through her bio?

TeriAnn Trevenen: Absolutely. Suzie is a vegan health coach and blogger as well as a volunteer Crisis Counselor with Crisis Text Line. She owns a gluten free/vegan bakery just outside of Lansing, Michigan – [Carly Cakes](#) – and they operate under a mission to employ adults with developmental disabilities and pay them a living wage.

So, first and foremost, I just love what you do. I love what you do. Just gives you all those good feelings. And I love bakery treats, too, so I think everything you're doing with your profession is incredible, absolutely incredible.

Suzie Skougard: Well, thank you so much. It was inspired by my youngest, who has Celiac. So, she also has Down's Syndrome, and it was kind of wanting to find a way that she could be included in birthday treats and celebrations.

TeriAnn Trevenen: I love that. I love that.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Tell us a little bit more about that. Give us some history. Tell us about your health journey and just what started you on this entire path in life.

Suzie Skougard: Okay. Well, my youngest, like I said, while amazing and perfect was born with Down syndrome as well as a life-threatening heart condition. With that heart condition, we had a couple of close calls, months of hospital stays, and she ended up having open heart surgery at four months old. I didn't really know how to cope with all of that and because it all happened so fast, I never really got the time to process it, and I wound up with Postpartum PTSD.

My anxiety was through the roof. I was miserable. And to self-medicate, I was eating junk and drinking a lot of alcohol at night. I was about 55 pounds heavier than I am right now. The extra weight was a strain on my body. I was always tired, I was never able to sleep, and I was really truly suffering from my Rheumatoid Arthritis.

I went to doctor after doctor wanting them to fix me, they'd prescribe something new, sometimes the side-effects that would made things worse and for me, and nothing got better. I wasn't able to be there the way I wanted to be there for my kids, and the way they needed me, so I kind of had to rethink everything about how we were living.

So, I woke up one day and had just reached my limit. I told my husband that I needed to change. I needed to get healthy even if I wasn't sure what healthy even was at this point. And we had both said at various points that we were going to get healthier, but this time I told him that I meant it and I would do it with, or without him.

That night, his blood pressure got to dangerous levels and he collapsed to the floor. He was hospitalized. And it was that moment of realizing that that situation could have resulted in a serious stroke, complete kidney failure, or even death, that was the wakeup call that it was now or never, and thankfully, we were in this together and we were going to do these changes together.

Jonathan Hunsaker: It's just hard for me to hear the story, because you sometimes have to hit that rock bottom to make that change. And I just can't imagine. I mean it was one thing after another after another that was just stacking up against you, and I can imagine just being up against the wall at that point, putting your arms up like "Enough is enough. It's time to do something."

And unfortunately, a lot of people don't do something, right? They continue to talk about doing something, they continue to think about doing something, they want to do something, but then they stay on the same path. And so, I love that you did something. What was the biggest change that you made? What was that big something?

Suzie Skougard: Well, before we—before he even got home from the hospital, I cleared out all the alcohol and high-salt foods from our house. But the doctors gave very little other direction for us to follow. But I knew I needed to started cooking more. And I didn't totally understand what the best options for us were then, nutritionally, but looking back, I see that I still established that routine of daily cooking and meal prep, and we were able to cut-out fast food and restaurant meals.

I started doing daily yoga, first at home using Yoga by Adrienne free videos on YouTube, and then once I was comfortable enough, I found a studio and a gym.

I also began heavily relying on Buddhist philosophy to unscramble the PTSD, which led me to a new understanding about the nature of suffering. Like, we have physical pain, and the pain of loss and change, but then there is also pervasive pain. Say, if we were injured in an accident, we'd have the physical pain of the accident, the suffering or change of our car being totaled, but we would also have the pervasive pain, which is the pain we can control.

And in that imaginary accident scenario, it might be worrying what everyone else is going to think about us, it might be replaying over and over what we could have done differently. We can't truly control physical pain or the pain of loss or change. They are going to happen, but we can control pervasive pain, and who doesn't want to hurt less? So the rest of the journey grew from my desire to reduce the pervasive suffering that I was putting out into the world and to free my mind from it.

The day I woke up and began a different life for our family, I didn't wake up with any less depression or anxiety than I had the day before. I didn't wake up with less swollen, or achy joints than I had the day before. I didn't wake up with more money, or less on my plate. We were all extremely sick. There was nothing good that changed to lead us in that direction. Nothing about our situation really changed, but the way that I looked at it did.

TeriAnn Trevenen: So, I think there's a few good points there in what you shared. I mean first of all, you talked about being in the hospital and really not being given any advice. I think that there's definitely a place and purpose for modern medicine and what conventional medicine can do, but one thing that we know, and is fact, is that a lot of doctors aren't trained and they don't have a lot of education in nutrition.

And so, I think that's one place where, when you face a really big health scare like your family faced, that people really have to dig deep, because most of the time, the answer is "Here's a pill to fix what's wrong," which really creates more symptoms and more issues. But really, it's like "What are you eating? And what are you going to change?"

And even if they ask you that question and go down that path, it's such a small list of things that they'll walk through with you to talk about how you can change your health. And so, I think you taking that initiative to go out and say, "I'm getting all this out of my house, I'm bringing this into my house, and I'm going to make this lifestyle change" is a huge step that a lot of people never make because they feel like it's such a daunting task.

But it's one of the best changes you can make. Nutrition impacts every aspect of our lives in ways we can't even imagine, and it's not something that we're talked to about frequently when it comes to going to the doctor, facing health issues, getting our health back on track, but it's such a critical component of our health.

And I think the second thing that you talked about that was really, really important is, it's not just about our physical health, but it's about our emotional health and wellbeing, which we also don't talk about this enough, but our emotional health and wellbeing is extremely tied to how we feel physically and vice versa.

And so, I think it's really powerful, in sharing your story, that you made big changes for your family with nutrition and emotional wellbeing, but you didn't notice the changes right away. It's not like some big massive thing happened the next day. Massive change requires massive action, but to see the success

of that action takes time. It's a process. It's not like instant gratification. Good health, long-term health is a long journey and a long process, and it doesn't ever look the same from day to day. It changes day to day because our bodies are constantly changing. So, I mean it's a really powerful message.

Suzie Skougard: Thank you. Yeah. And it really did come down to just baby steps. Like you know how everybody is into Marie Kondo and "The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up?" Well, I started "Marie Kondo-ing" my brain. All our routines, everything that we ate, I would examine everything we did objectively.

So, what was I putting into my body? Did it bring me joy? And there were a lot of foods I just ate or served out of habit, mindlessly, that I didn't even like, that the family didn't even like. My kids had the same amount of "Ew" factor to dishes that I would put down then that they do occasionally now. So, there were foods, that I did like and I could say they also did bring me joy, but maybe they weren't the best option to build my diet around.

So I started reflecting on what joy actually meant to me. Was it a temporary moment derived from immediate pleasure? Or was it the kind that came from being the kind of parent I wanted to be, from having a body I could be comfortable in, and joints that weren't angry and screaming at me all of the time? And in that moment of reflection and pause before eating, there was that breakthrough. The novelty of "a treat" would wear off and I wouldn't feel like I was actually missing out on anything by picking a healthier treat because I was actively choosing, in that moment, health.

So, my focus was progress not perfection, and those little daily choices led us to the point where we could start making big changes overall.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yeah, and I think that's a really important point. I think that overall theme of what you're sharing. Here's this choice. You had that choice, and you made choices, and those choices brought about the success you're now seeing with your family and your health. And it's just those choices, moment to moment, day to day, week to week, that build on one another and bring that relief your family was looking for of better health and going on a journey of health that would benefit every member of your family, which is really powerful.

Choices, I think one of the most powerful things we have, and it's one of the most difficult things to face as far as we have to choose for ourselves things that make life better, and it's harder for people to do than we can even imagine. It's such a big thing to take that first step in the unknown, especially when it comes to your body, and say, "I'm doing something drastically different." It's so hard.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Well, you know? And I did a video about this a few days ago. I think a lot of people get lost in the planning, and they get lost in the perfection, right? So, "I'm going to..." "This is exactly what we're going to eat, and we're going to eat every single day, and we're going to do this, and we're going to work out."

And they create this whole plan, which might take weeks to create, which helps procrastinate taking that first step, and then you start following that plan, and all of a sudden, reality hits. It's not like you thought it would be in your head. There's all these shifts, all these pivots, all these things you have to do.

And the best thing to do is, you don't need to make a plan, just get started taking some sort of action, right? Just clean the alcohol out of the house. Then, what's the next step? Let's start cooking home-cooked meals. They may not all be clean, they may not all be organic, they may not all be healthy, but let's get out of the habit of eating at restaurants. Let's get out of the habit of eating the junk processed foods.

And slowly, it will get better and better. I mean and that's what you're sharing. It's like I mean you would get to a point to where it was a healthy treat that you would choose. But that—not all of that starts on day one. It's all just a process of just introducing your body into this new way of living and to eating, and it doesn't all have to be done overnight.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Absolutely.

Jonathan Hunsaker: So, talk to use about what are some of the changes that you made in your diet?

Suzie Skougard: Well, getting rid of soda was a huge one for me. I was a massive diet Coke drinker. I drank—there was a day that I drank 24 cans of Diet Coke.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Wow!

Suzie Skougard: I'm not even exaggerating.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Wow!

Suzie Skougard: I knew that that was one of the ones that had to go right away. So, I began to learn about the environmental toll that processed foods take on our planet. I learned that there are 844 million people, that's one in 10 of our global population currently affected by the Global Water Crisis. So, every day, more than 800 children under five die without access to clean drinking water.

So, when you think about the fact that it takes 132 gallons of water to make a 2-liter bottle of soda, that's 132 gallons that would mean a chance at life to someone else. And I know that just because I'm not drinking it, doesn't mean that a single life will be saved, but as part of the reducing suffering, that meant removing myself from cycles where I was actively contributing.

And then we started making the shift to sustainable living, and it was that environmental avenue that lead me to Veganism. I watched a few vegan documentaries on Netflix, and from the reduce the

suffering angle, I knew 100 percent that it was the next big step we needed to make. I could not support factory farms and I wanted to combat climate change as best as I could.

But I had hesitations. There are unhealthy vegans, and I didn't want to end up in just a new way to be unhealthy. So, I really started researching the vegan diet for evidence-based improvements. And through that, I found the Whole Foods Plant Based lifestyle. Eating Whole Foods Plant Based has been linked to a number of health benefits, including reducing and even reversing heart disease, certain cancers, obesity, diabetes and cognitive decline.

In order to make that transition for our family, I took a couple of Whole Foods Plant Based Nutrition courses and read *How Not to Die* by Dr. Michael Greger over and over and over so that I would be armed with all of the information that we would need to be successful. And I'm going to clarify that when I'm talking about the Whole Foods Plant Based lifestyle, it has absolutely nothing to do with the store Whole Foods.

It is just a way to say, minimally processed, and nothing added, nothing taken away from your food. That means no meat, no cheeses, no eggs, no refined sugar, no cooking oil, even olive. That means that when you look at a label for Peanut Butter, it says: peanuts. And we eat our beans, berries, fruits, cruciferous veggies, greens, flaxseed and nuts every day.

We do supplement our B-vitamins, but we also use a lot of a Nutritional Yeast so we get some in through our food. I also make sure the kids get plenty of fats for their developing brains, but they get it from things like avocado, or flax milk, so that they don't have that saturated fat or the hormones that dairy milk has. Flax Milk actually is a better source of calcium, protein and omega-3 than dairy.

So, cutting out processed foods also made it easier for our whole household to keep gluten at bay for my Celiac daughter, drastically cutting her risk of cross-contamination, improved her health dramatically. Her skin got better, her stomach bloat went away, and leading me to find that gluten was also making my Rheumatoid Arthritis worse, it was contributing to inflammation. I started a daily routine of celery juice, amla, turmeric and ginger, that I toss everything in all together and drink it every morning, and I have never felt better.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Awesome. Yeah, and it's interesting, you talking about your—the diet with your kids. I don't even like to call it a diet. I really don't like that word. So, I shouldn't use that word. But I think everybody has different choices in their nutrition and how they eat and how they do things. But I think something really interesting about your story is that—we just did [a podcast last week on kids](#), and kids eating healthier, and how it's impacting our emotions and their behavior, and how it's impacting their success in school.

And you're a perfect example of someone who's taken this new way of life for you and your family. Your choice, which is the most important thing, that you have a choice in how your family eats, but once you

make that choice, people are so scared to dive into that with their kids and their family. But I think we live in a day and age where there's so much information available, right?

I've used a lot of the different things that you just talked about to cook, and while I'm not vegan, they're—all of these things you've talked about in your nutrition for your family and how you're cooking, there are so many creative ways to cook for kids that they will like the food and they can enjoy the food. I think people hear, like "You cook at home and you make really healthy food for your kids. Do they even eat? Do you guys eat? How do you even eat anything that sounds good or fun?"

And it's like I think it's such a misconception, right? Like I love hearing your story because there are so many ways to cook at home and make it fun and make it taste good, and I think some of the misconceptions, whether you're keto, or you're vegan, or whatever it is that you eat, I think people always have these stigmas of like "Well then their food just must not be good," or "Their kids must not eat their food."

And I love that you've kind of just taken the bull by the horns and you're like "Yes, we can do this. Yes, there are creative ways for my kids to eat. Yes, there are options for us." And look at all these different things that you and your family eat. And that's such a powerful testimonial to the fact that we can make choices for our family, find creative ways to make those choices work and have a happier, healthier family. Super powerful.

Jonathan Hunsaker: And I love the idea that you changed it for your whole family, right? So, your daughter has Celiac, and so it was like "Let's get rid of everything in the house that's gluten," right? And so, it's not just her that has to eat different, or that's treated differently. You're following it, your husband's following it, right?

You're feeding it to the whole family, which I think makes it that much easier, because somebody isn't being left out, or they don't get the treats, or they don't get—and so, yeah, just I think it was all really effective the way that you did it, and I love the clarity around whole foods. We talk about whole foods plant-based diets a lot, we've got [Ocean Robbins](#) on here, we've had a lot of people that follow a whole food plant-based diet. And yeah, we're not talking about Whole Foods the place, we're talking—

TeriAnn Trevenen: It's sad, that in this day and age, a lot of people think that whole foods diets are from—

Jonathan Hunsaker: From Whole Foods, right?

TeriAnn Trevenen: True story. But it is true, yeah.

Jonathan Hunsaker: We're just talking about the way it was grown outside, right?

Suzie Skougard: Yeah.

Jonathan Hunsaker: [0:28:21] in boxes and bags and processed and ground up and all of that, just the way it was meant to be grown.

TeriAnn Trevenen: So many kids are going to grow up in this generation and think "What's a whole food?" Which is really sad. I think that things are changing. I think that that's coming back into the forefront of people's minds, how we're eating and supplementing, all of the things that we discuss on this podcast, that so many kids, you would say whole foods, and they'd be like "What is that?"

Jonathan Hunsaker: They've got no idea.

TeriAnn Trevenen: They have no idea, no idea.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Alright, so you've got to tell us, what was the biggest obstacle that you faced on this journey?

Suzie Skougard: Well, there were a lot of, like you were talking about, a lot of misconceptions about the Whole Foods Plant Based lifestyle. So, everybody always asks me if it's about us getting protein. And veggies, you have a surprising amount of protein. Broccoli has a higher protein per calorie ratio than steak. Obviously, you have to eat a lot of broccoli to get that, but it still has a higher protein per calorie ratio than steak. And when you're eating nothing but a lot of different types of veggies and a lot of different types of nuts and grains, it's really easy to make it up.

It also was a lot easier getting the kids to adopt the changes than I even thought that it would be. My son was an incredibly picky eater, mostly in part with his endocrine disorder, and they adapted quite quickly. We created a routine around it, so they started helping with the dinners, getting them involved in their food choices and empowering them to make the right choices, and explaining to them "There's this one, and this one will do this for your body, or there's this one, and this one's not going to do this, and it might make you feel a little bit sick to your tummy. But you can make the choice." And just kind of empowering them to make that choice for themselves. We taught them so much about why we were making the changes.

Suzie Skougard: Okay. It was actually a lot easier getting the kids to adopt the changes than I expected it to be. My son was an incredibly picky eater. But they adapted quite quickly because we created a whole routine around it, and they could help. Even the youngest one could still find something to do, whether it was just helping prepare the salads.

And my littlest one, the one with Down's Syndrome, likes to tear lettuce. And we just give her her own little bowl of lettuce that she can sit and tear up while everybody's cooking. And she gets to participate just as much. So, we taught them about why we were making those changes, too. and the bottom line, it was just the food that was available.

If there's no junk to really choose from in the cupboards, they aren't going to pick it. It's just not there. If they have a choice between, "Okay, I have an apple or a banana," they still feel like they're making a decision. Their palates then changed over time, and now they prefer healthier foods, saying other foods, processed foods, when we go to a birthday or party or something, I do let them have whatever cupcakes are served, but they'll usually opt not to, saying that it's too sweet.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Love it.

Suzie Skougard: Yeah. And everyone also thinks that it is so much more expensive to eat this way, but really it's only buying the Organic/Gluten Free processed foods that carry that real heavy price tag. I feed our family of 6 a gluten free, vegan diet full of color and vitamins, 3 meals a day for about 100.00 a week. And we were probably spending that on Starbucks, soda, beer and wine alone before the change.

The only real challenge is that it does require a lot of prep, whether meal planning, or prepping ahead of time. I make our plant-based milks, I make all of our fruit spreads, every meal is from scratch, and I also work on top of it all. But it is worth making the time for. It's a choice knowing that I am giving my kids the best start I can. It feels really good to see them go back for seconds of an all-vegetable dish. And it's important to keep in mind that fast-food options don't really save any time or money when you look at what they cost you later on in terms of health and quality of life.

Jonathan Hunsaker: I mean listen, if you can go to a fast food place and you can get 10 chicken nuggets for \$1, I don't think that's chicken, number one. Number two, it's definitely not healthy. There's no nutrients in it. You know what I mean? And we get sucked into this idea that it's more convenient, that it's cheaper.

And quite frankly, we get sucked into the idea that we need food all the time, right? Food is everywhere. You drive down the street and you constantly just are advertised food, food, food, food, food. And so, when you make that shift to cooking at home, when you make that shift to prepping your own meals, and prepping like that, one, you know everything that's going into it, so there is no question, you don't need to ask if it's organic or not, or "What have you used?" or anything like that.

But ultimately, it is cheaper, right? And I think that you get family time that we lose a lot of times now. I mean I love that you talk about having your family involved, and your daughter's tearing up the lettuce, and they get to choose this or that, an apple or a banana.

And so, it's just sometimes, listen, I love technology, I love what technology does for our world in a lot of ways, but I think in a lot of things, we need to take a step back to how we used to do it as well. I think that it can be abused. And I love the idea of stepping back and doing the meal prep, I mean having that family time. And likely, the TV is off and the electronics are away. And so, these are times that you'll never get back again with your kids. And so, I love all those activities.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yeah, let's just go back to one tiny little point. So, you have a family of six, correct?

Suzie Skougard: Yeah.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Six? I just want to say one more time that she said three meals a day for about \$100 a week. So, anyone who says you can't eat clean because it's too expensive, she just proved you wrong. That's insane. I mean that's incredible. And so, I just wanted to point that out, because a lot of people, that's one of the misconceptions, that you can't eat as healthy on a—a healthy diet on a budget, but you can. Everyone thinks that organic, whole food, meal plans and prepping and groceries are so expensive, but you're living proof right there, \$100 a week for six people eating healthy foods.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Well, you're not going to be eating Doritos, right? You're not going to be eating all of this other junk that you think "I'm going to miss it," but you won't. In a couple weeks, your palate changes, right?

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yep.

Jonathan Hunsaker: And you'll start craving the fruits, the vegetables, the healthier foods. And so, yes, you will go through withdrawal for a couple weeks, but if you make that change, it's that much easier the longer that you do it.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Absolutely. So, what would your three biggest tips for other people out there who are facing health scares with their family, needing to make the change, needing to take control of their health and their life, what would you say to them?

Suzie Skougard: You don't have to make a sudden shift. It doesn't have to open—I'm going to start over.

You don't have to make a sudden shift. You don't need to throw out everything processed in one go. Just maybe the next time you go to pick up burger meat, don't, and grill a portobello cap instead and see how you like it. Instead of milk, try a plant-based alternative and then go from there.

I would also say turmeric and ginger. Add them to everything. And drink a ton of water. I drink over a gallon of water a day. I even have one sitting right next to me right now.

And then, the very last one would be to Marie Kondo your brain. Don't mindlessly snack, pause and reflect before you eat, consider what that food is bringing into your life. If you don't need what it has to offer, if you don't want that contributing to your overall wellbeing, then just thank it, and let it go.

TeriAnn Trevenen: So, really quickly, Marie Kondo is a professional organizer. She has books, she's well-known throughout the world. Remind me really quickly, because it's been a while since I've seen some things on her. Like she asks, like when she'll go through people's houses and organize their house, she'll

ask certain questions. Do you know off the top of your head what some of those are, what some of the questions she asks people when it comes to like their personal belongings?

Suzie Skougard: Yeah, so like it's just kind of like the first, the big one, "Does it spark joy? Does it really spark joy?"

TeriAnn Trevenen: That's right.

Suzie Skougard: And there might be a food that's maybe not so healthy that does spark joy for you, that—our food has such strong ties to holidays, celebrations, meals, our families that we grew up with. And I think that it's still totally reasonable to still include elements of that. It just doesn't have to be your everyday.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yeah.

Suzie Skougard: It doesn't have to make up every meal you have. You can find a way to substitute different pieces of that meal with maybe a healthier option. And if it's made cooked in a heavy cream, maybe try a little bit of something else, maybe a plant-based alternative, and see if it still gives you that happy sparked joy feeling. And then, as far as anything else, I'm blanking. Sorry.

TeriAnn Trevenen: No, you're totally fine. I love that you said that, because if you think about it long-term, for your brain first and foremost, does it spark joy? Because I think a lot of us live in our minds in a way that doesn't serve a purpose. I think we, going back to what you talked about with suffering, I think we create needless suffering in our lives, we create needless guilt and shame in our lives.

And when you say, "Does it spark joy?" I remember now seeing some of the things where she would go through people's houses, and like "Hold it, feel it. How does it feel for you?" When you think about that with your mind, it's like "Does it spark joy?" If it doesn't, then why are you holding it there, and why does it—what do you need to flush it out?

And I think the same goes with food. If you really tie food to happiness, yes, that Diet Coke might make you happy in the moment, but how is it going to make you feel long-term? And if you take it even one step further, it's like looking at your food options, I think snacking is so prevalent now, and I'm not saying you should snack or you shouldn't snack, I'm not telling people how to eat, I'm just saying, you go into the pantry and you're like "I'm going to eat this and this and this," and we're just constantly bombarded with food, but we're not thoughtful about it.

Often, we just go through the motions instead of thinking "Does this serve a purpose for me? Does this feel good? Is this going to make me feel good?" It's not even just about joy with food, it's like "How am I going to feel after I eat this?" Yeah, it's fun to eat things that are joyful every once in a while, that treat that you love to eat, or that thing that you love to eat that may not be what you would consider the healthiest thing, but every once in a while.

Other foods, it's like looking at it, "Do I need to eat this right now? Am I going to feel good because I ate this?" And so, I love that concept of Marie Kondo your brain first of all, because I think "Does it spark joy?" And if it doesn't, then why are you doing it? Why do you feel it? Why are you thinking that? Why are you living in that space? And I think the same goes for food. Why are you eating it? Why is it part of your diet? Why are you going through this process? I think if people thought about that a lot more with their food, they would make better choices. Thoughtful about your food.

Jonathan Hunsaker: It's just being intentional, right?

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yeah, I love that word.

Jonathan Hunsaker: And I think that we coast through life in a lot of ways, and we do that with our food. All of a sudden, I feel something in my stomach. Let me go run and grab some food for it. When you really just might be thirsty and you need some water. Or you're walking past the pantry and you're kind of bored, "Ah, I've got 20 minutes to kill. Let me grab a bag of this. Let me grab..." But we're really not hungry.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Or we're sad, and we're like "Let me go eat food," instead of "Why do I feel these feelings and what can I do to bring me joy right now?" too.

Jonathan Hunsaker: And I don't even know what we always even identify the feeling. We just—maybe you are sad and you just go grab some food, and if you just stop for a second and ask yourself "Am I really hungry?" you may think "Holy crap, I don't need to eat this whole box of ice cream."

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yeah.

Jonathan Hunsaker: You know? Or whatever it is, your pleasure. So, I think it's about being intentional. And I think a lot of it is about slowing down. We are in such a fast-paced world, and technology has helped with a lot of that. Just stop and take a breath, and think about what you're doing before you're doing it, and ask the question "Why?" That, to me, I think is some of the best advice in the world is ask yourself why before you do a lot of things. Because once you're clear on it, then you know you're at least making a conscious decision to eat the treat or not eat the treat, or whatever it is.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Yeah, absolutely. Suzie, so all this has been so amazing. I've loved hearing your journey, I've loved hearing what you've been through. I think so many people are going to be able to relate to your story, and so many people are going to be able to say, like "I get that. I get that," or "I love they made that change. I can do that, too."

This is a real-life story, a massive health scare, which unfortunately, is the reason a lot of people change. But look at how it's benefited your life. And if there's other people who are facing this, they're going to

hear your story and say like "I need to make that change before it gets to that point." And so, I appreciate you being vulnerable and sharing your story.

It's a powerful story and it's not always easy to say, "Like we were at this point. It was so bad. This is **[0:42:01]**. I ate like this, and I had this many Diet Cokes in a day." Like some people don't want to share that. But I love that you opened up and shared your story, and it's a real-life story, so relatable for so many people.

My last question today is a question that I often ask of people on the podcast. You've been through such an amazing journey, from where your family was with your health, and eating the standard American diet, to changing your diet, changing your mindset, opening a bakery that serves such a major purpose in your life for multiple reasons. What would be the one thing that you would say to people? If you could only say one more thing to the world about their health and their health journey, what would be the last thing you would say to people?

Suzie Skougard: I'd want them to know that there is no finish line on the path to wellness, the continued journey is the goal. So, you can't fail at this. Obviously, someone could say, if you aren't their perceived picture of healthy, then you failed, but you have to be able to give yourself some grace. No one starts their journey to wellness in the same place. We all have different experiences that have led us to where we are and have led us to different decisions. We were exposed to different food, and to different people.

Suzie Skougard: So, if you take a look at me, and you look at Simone Biles, I'm not going to come close to **that** image of health ever in my life. But for where I started just a few short years ago, and for where I am now, the amount of change I have adapted to, I am doing quite well, substantially better than where I was when I started.

So, every day that you wake up and commit yourselves to being on a journey, you are changing. You are becoming. And if things are in a continual state of change, motion, and becoming, then there is never really an end. Every day presents a new opportunity to get better, to learn something new, to show compassion to ourselves, others, animals and our planet. And kind of like with that Marie Kondo-ing our brain, every second really is a new chance to make a new choice.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Love it. And I love how you said becoming, we're constantly becoming. I've had this conversation with friends before about becoming. We're always becoming a better version of ourselves, always becoming new things, and that's a beautiful thing about life. And I think that's the beautiful thing about your health journey.

It's one story that be something that so many people relate to, but then they can go and take what they need from your story, from other stories, from other places where they can get information on health and choose for them what looks best and change their lives. So, I love your story. Thank you so much for sharing it with us today. Thank you for being with us. It's been incredible to hear it.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Yeah, Suzie, thank you so much.

Suzie Skougard: Thank you for having me.

Jonathan Hunsaker: So, tell us the name, again, of your bakery, so people, when they're in Lansing, Michigan, can stop by and see you.

Suzie Skougard: It's Carly Cakes.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Carly Cakes. And do you have a website? Do you have an Instagram?

Suzie Skougard: I have @CarlyCakesGFV on Instagram.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Awesome.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Excellent.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Love it.

Jonathan Hunsaker: We're going to have links to everything on our website, EmpoweringYouOrganically. We'll have links to the different books that you recommended on there, just kind of more of your whole story. We'll have the transcript; we have the show notes and any other links there that are pertinent to the show. Any last words? Anything else you want to share?

TeriAnn Trevenen: No, just love this experience today. Lots of good information, for sure.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Suzie, thank you so much for taking the time. I know you're going to inspire others, and you have been an inspiration. So, thank you for all that you do and thank you for sharing your story with all of us.

Suzie Skougard: Thank you so much.

Jonathan Hunsaker: Thanks, everyone.

TeriAnn Trevenen: Have a great day, everyone.