



Essential Alchemy

The Ancient Art of Healing Naturally

Season 4, Episode 2: Healthy Kids, Happy Kids with Elisa Song

Jodi Cohen: Hello and welcome to Essential Alchemy. Alchemy is defined as the power or process that changes or transforms something in a mysterious or impressive way. My hope is that the information in this podcast can help you transform your mood, energy, and physical health, or even connect some dots to help you shift your mental or emotional state.

I'm your host, Jodi Cohen, a bestselling author, award-winning journalist, functional practitioner, lifelong learner, and founder of Vibrant Blue Oils, a company that sells proprietary blends of high-quality, organic, or wildcrafted essential oil remedies designed to help you return to your ideal mental, physical, and emotional state. You can find out more about me and my company at vibrantblueoils.com. And with that, let's get started with today's episode.

Hi, I am Jodi Cohen, your host, and I am so thrilled beyond thrilled to share one of my very, very dear friends Dr. Elisa Song's new book, which if you are a mom, if you are a grandparent, if you're an auntie, you have to get this. It's going to be fabulous for the kiddos. So Dr. Lisa Song is a Stanford NYU and UCSF trained integrative pediatrician, pediatric functional medicine expert, and most importantly, a mom to two adorable kiddos. You want to say their names and how old they are now?

Elisa Song: Bodhi is now 12 and a half, and Kenzie is 14. They are still adorable.

Jodi Cohen: They're still adorable, and good job mama. She is the bestselling author of the Healthy Kids Happy Kids Integrated Pediatrician's Guide to Hold Child Resilience, and she's on a mission to revolutionize the future of children's health. She's dedicated her career to helping parents and practitioners bridge the gap between conventional and holistic pediatrics with an evidence-based, pediatric-backed, parent-sponsored approach. So welcome, Elisa.

Elisa Song: Oh, thank you. I always love chatting with you. I mean, you're one of my dearest friends, so thank you for having me on.

Jodi Cohen: No, and I'm just so excited because you really do, you're very elegant and you're very thoughtful and you're very balanced. You are that voice that I wish I had when my kids were slightly younger because you look at all sides and you back everything up with research, which I'm so excited about this book, especially because you delve into my absolute favorite topic, the vagus nerve. So can you share a little bit about how you picked what you included in this book and how you prioritize things?

Elisa Song: Well, as a functional medicine pediatrician, and many listeners may who have heard of functional medicine or practicing functional medicine or seeing a functional medicine practitioner that one of the foundational principles is that all disease starts in the gut. That is Hippocrates centuries ago. But then when we look at children and I thought, well, we're seeing this rising tide of worsening increasing rates of chronic disease in kids. And so it's not just enough to say that all disease starts in the gut. We have to figure out how do we proactive as parents.

And so that means that we can also flip that statement and say all health starts in the gut. So for the past 20 years, I've really been focused on kids' microbiomes and how do we help their gut-brain, gut immune system connections, gut hormone, gut gene connection, and how that really and truly is. I think once we can master that, that is one of the best and most important ways that we can help our kids thrive and build that resilience for a lifetime. So that is why yes, it's one of your favorite topics. It's one of my favorite topics, and it is a whole chapter in the book. It's that important.

Jodi Cohen: I know, and you have great graphics. Good job.

Elisa Song: Thank you.

Jodi Cohen: What I love is that you're catching them young and you share a little bit about, I know what happens in grownups, what kind of disregulates, the vagus nerve in kids.

Elisa Song: Well, it's interesting because the vagus nerve is that two-way information is super high between the gut and the brain. And most of that communication actually occurs from the gut to the brain, something like 80 to 90%. So when we think about dysregulation to the vagus nerve, we still have to look at the gut, even though we think of the vagus nerve as, oh, feel calm and zen. Well, guess what? If your gut microbiome is not in optimal health, there's no way that communication through the vagus nerve is going to result in a healthy mind, healthy brain. And there are so many factors in our modern world that really almost on a daily basis, or I will say on a daily basis, are working to disrupt your child's microbiome, which is why as parents, we have to be super savvy and know, wow, okay, these are the first of all, why is your child's gut microbiome so important to protect and preserve? Number two, what are the factors that can disrupt your gut microbiome? How do we minimize those? Number three, really importantly, what are the factors that help to nourish and optimize your child's gut microbiome? So all of those, and then of course, we know with the nearly one in two kids today diagnosed with a chronic disease, a lot of kids' microbiomes, a lot of adult microbiomes are disrupted already. So a whole section of my book, part three, is really focused on how do we restore and recover a disruptive microbiome.

Jodi Cohen: Half of the children? That's so sad.

Elisa Song: It's startling. And I'll tell you another paper that I read just as I was starting my functional medicine career. This was in 2005. I had started my integrated pediatric practice in 2004, and then in 2005, there was an article in the New England Journal of Medicine highly respected article, and I can't believe that this did not get press headlines like, what are we doing right now? We need to do something different. So in that article, the researchers took estimates of how our health was progressing as a population and estimated that over the past thousand years, our lifespans have been getting longer and longer medical advances, healthy living. All of that article, those researchers predicted that for the first time in history, our children are expected to have shorter lifespans than us, their parents, all due to diet and lifestyle-related factors, all due to the way we're doing things and eating and living in our modern world. And so we love our modern conveniences. None of us want to go back to the stone age. And yet at the same time, we need to realize a lot of these modern conveniences are contributing to this rise in chronic disease. And if we don't really raise the awareness flags and help parents and children navigate this modern world, we're not going to be in any better shape 20 years from now when we really should have been sounding the alarm 20 years ago.

Jodi Cohen: That's one thing that I really love. I mean, having the perspective as both a pediatrician and a mom and a mom whose kids are normal, whose kids get sick occasionally, yes, in the er, you really get it. You really know how hard it is as a mom to execute on it. So let's talk a little bit about your magic, your five things from magic. Can you share what you recommend?

Elisa Song: Yeah. I wanted to make this really simple for parents and kids to understand and to really implement, because of course, as a mom, we're all way too busy and we don't want to make things more challenging than we have to. And so I also, I know this works from a practical standpoint because I had the opportunity to create a six-week curriculum for my daughter's third and fourth-grade class. So for these eight to 10-year-old, and it was all about their microbiome, but we call it healthy belly happy you, and taught them all about the hundreds of trillions of tiny, microscopic friends in their tummies and all the benefits if we take care of our tiny friends, they take care of us. And why it's so important to care for this ecosystem in us, just like we care for the world's ecosystem. Earth Day didn't pass too long ago.

And so this ecosystem inside us is really one of our, it probably is our most important ecosystem to take care of. And so the five things for microbiome magic that we can do every day are five things that your kids and you are already doing every day. And so in the book, I just talk about how to make those simple shifts so that we can learn how to do them like a gut hero.

Elisa Song: And so those five things, of course, we need to eat every day. Well, unless you're doing a fast, but kids shouldn't fast. So first is eating. We are eating every day. So how do we mindfully think about ways to what to get in to nourish our gut microbiome and also equally important, what kind of things do we want to keep out that are not nourishing to our gut microbiome? Three other things that are more lifestyle-related, how can we move our bodies?

And so those five things, of course, we need to eat every day. Well, unless you're doing a fast, but kids shouldn't fast. So first is eating. We are eating every day. So how do we mindfully think about ways to what to get in to nourish our gut microbiome and also equally important, what kind of things do we want to keep out that are not nourishing to our gut microbiome? Three other things that are more lifestyle-related, how can we move our bodies?

It's like all of this everyday surge, surge surge. And that's a normal response to stress. Yes. What's not normal in our society is we are not consistently able to engage our nervous system, our vagus nerve to get out of that stress response not healthy. So the idea isn't have zero stress. The idea is you know what? There are stressors in life, and that is actually a normal part of our makeup to feel that stress. But we should also be able to engage our vagus nerve to get back into the parasympathetic rest and digest state. Remember the parasympathetic, the vagus nerve is really the major component of our parasympathetic nervous system. If we do that and engage our vagus nerve and improve something called heart rate variability, which is a measure of how well our vagus nervous functioning, there are studies in children that have been found that that alone can improve their microbiome diversity and function independent of what they're eating. I love that. I mean, I love it because for some parents who have really picky kids to come in and say, just get more fiber in their diet, that can be a little more daunting. But if we can sit and practice gratitude with our kids or really practice diaphragmatic belly or walk in nature and do these activities mindfully in a way that we are purposefully engaging our vagus nerves so that your kids can do that anytime they want to, we will have a steady, recurrent way throughout the day that we're supporting our gut microbiome.

Jodi Cohen: No, I love that. And one of the things, especially for my community, they're going to be so excited about you. Were generous enough to mention vibrant blue oils in your book and more generous to really detail reflex points. I joke, my son would never eat kale. It was really hard for him take supplements, but oils, he was all over, especially he was a sensory seeker, topically apply them, oh, whatever you want, mom. And so I love that. I feel like there are a lot of kids that are complicated. They're picky eaters, they've got sensory issues. It's hard. So I was hoping you could share some of the points that you share in your practice where you encourage moms and definitely by the book, because there's a lot more information in there, but how to topically apply essential oils points that really.

Elisa Song: I love essential oils, and I mentioned Vibrant Blue Oils is one of my recommended brands because you have to know essential oils are therapeutic and you want to treat them like medicines. You want to treat them as therapeutic as having therapeutic benefits. They're not just to smell good, and we can overdo them, and we can use the wrong ones that they're not going to do harm, but they may not have the intended purpose that you want. And worse yet, if you buy any old essential oil in the market, you don't know what's inside. I mean, there are many, many synthetic oils that smell amazing. They smell exactly like what you expect them to smell like, but being synthetic, it has none of the therapeutic properties that are going to be, oh, it just smells nice. So when we're using oils, we're not using oils as air fresheners.

We are using oils. We are using oils as medicine. I mean, this is really and truly, and it can be powerful. And one of the ways I love to use essential oils is I teach parents acupressure points, these reflex points that have also therapeutic benefit. In Chinese medicine, there are various points that can help when your kids have a fever or when they have anxiety, or when they're having trouble sleeping. And I love using these acupressure points and holding pressure while applying some essential oils. So you can do that. And you had your heart blend, which I thought was a perfect idea. I mean, there are some.

Jodi Cohen: For kids with anxiety or for Max was like this, the kids that run a little hot.

Elisa Song: So there are a couple of points that I think would be really helpful to know, and I'd be so to even correlate with some of the vibrant blue oils, right? Yes. So this point that I just pointed out here, it's on the inner wrist crease or your pinky side. Now you'll feel a tendon there. If you move your wrist back and forth, you'll feel this tendon here. Yes. And then there's just right next to it. Okay, that point is called heart seven. Okay, heart seven. It's also in Chinese medicine. It's called the men or the spirit gate. We have a corresponding point in our ear, which you could also put a little dab right in the top part of your ear, exactly the very top part, just in that inner, if you look, there's a little triangle in depth. And so right there, now that point, this, she men just calms the nervous system.

So you could rub heart seven on there, and then just when you're done, you just hold pressure and just breathe into that point again, belly breathe. And when your belly breathes, we're keeping our shoulders down and not moving. And we're, as we're inhaling, there's a balloon in our belly inflating. And as we're exhaling, the balloon is deflating all while we keep our shoulders down. So that's a great point. Another point that actually I just thought of as we're speaking, you have a liver blend. Now, in Chinese medicine, the emotion that goes along with liver is anger, right? Yes. It's you're tantruming kids, your angry kids, your kids who tend to get aggressive when they're upset, or the kids who are like zero to 60, right? They're like that, right? Maybe your partner, right? Anyone, or maybe it's you. And so I think that would be perfect on liver three.

Elisa Song: Now I'm going to show you because I don't want to lift my feet up right now, but if you imagine this is your foot, okay? Yeah. And your foot, okay, your big toe and then your four other toes. Now it's a mirror image. So pretend this is the top of your foot, this point here in Chinese medicine, on your hand, in the web space between your thumb and your index finger is called large intestine four. When you look at on your foot, that web space between the first toe and the second toe is called liver three, liver three. So that's really good for those emotional outbursts. It's also really good for. I mentioned liver three in the book for helping with eye symptoms like pink eye conjunctivitis. It's also, yeah. So that's a really good one.

Jodi Cohen: A lot of questions about stress in the eye.

Elisa Song: And I'm like, yeah, any eye thing, liver.

Jodi Cohen: In your eye, but that's okay. That's great.

Elisa Song: Is actually, don't put the essential oils in your eye, please. But this is the point, right? Go ahead and put liver, liver essential oil on liver three. And then if you're having any immune issue, whether you're fighting a viral illness or I'm just thinking for kids, if they have a cold or a flu or a fever or headache, sinus pressure, this on your hand, large intestine four, that's good for getting out any of that, getting rid of any of that. So this, you could do your immune blend, you could do parasympathetic because we think of the vagus nerve and parasympathetic as more of an emotional calming, but it really is a calming of all of your body's responses. So when we're sick and we have inflammation as an appropriate response to being sick, because we need inflammation to fight infections, but once that infection is done, we also need the vagus nerve to kick in and say, Hey, inflammation, you've done your job. Let's get back into a steady state now, not have too much inflammation, not have chronic inflammation. So I think parasympathetic would be amazing for that. In fact, for people who have problems with postviral, chronic fatigue, whether it's from Epstein-Barr virus, or let's say long covid, vagus nerve stimulation can be a very powerful healing tool. And in fact, in Health Canada, there is a vagus nerve stimulating device that's approved for the treatment of long. And so that's why vagus nerve so important, not just to feel zen and great, I want your kids to feel calm.

Jodi Cohen: And you.

Elisa Song: But it is also to calm our nervous system and immune system at the same time. Really important.

Jodi Cohen: Do you have any points that you like for when kids get tummy aches or just I'm thinking all the issues that we used to.

Elisa Song: Get? Yeah. Well, and it's interesting because tummy aches can be if it's from a tummy bug or a tummy reflux or that kind of a tummy issue, then there's a point, you can look this up, there's a point called CV 12, Conception Vessel 12 is what it stands for. And if you take, okay, I have down here, I used to teach infant massage, so I have a baby here.

Jodi Cohen: My baby.

Elisa Song: Okay, so if you have your baby, and I'm going to show you. So if you imagine this is her belly button, and this is the end of her rib cage, right? Where your ribs meet in the middle. So halfway between there, halfway between perfect is Conception Vessel 12. So you could just put some parasympathetic right there. And...

Jodi Cohen: Is that good for constipation too? Yes, constipated.

Elisa Song: For constipation, any digestive issue, you could use conception vessel 12. But I would also add for constipation that the large intestine four that I was talking about just now, and for nervous tummy, if it's more like, mommy, I don't want to go to school, which Bodie gets a lot, Bodie a lot of times in the morning, my tummy hurts. And so it's really, we have to really assess, okay, going on, scan your body. Is it like a thick tummy? Is it a nervous tummy? Right? But nervous tummies are really common. And so there's a point, again, if you go to the inner crease, I'm going to hold up my baby here.

Jodi Cohen: Okay.

Elisa Song: If you go to your baby, the baby handy inner crease, and just a little bit above, right in the middle there, exactly right in the middle there, that point is called pericardium six. And that point is really good for calming. It's really good when your brain is going, going, going, and you're having a hard time sleeping. That's a point for kids who are having trouble sleeping on, just have them hold onto that while they're going to bed and...

Jodi Cohen: Or if they're in school, if they get anxious in class, this is great. No one needs to know.

Elisa Song: Nobody needs to know. Well, I mean, that's the beauty of the acupressure points is nobody needs to know what you're doing. You can just be under the desk just holding shemen, and with your thumb Duchenne men, and with your second finger, your index finger, hold heart seven. So heart seven here.

Jodi Cohen: All of the introverts out here.

Elisa Song: Pericardium six here.

And then it could be on your desk and you're just sitting in class and then getting ready for your test, getting ready for whatever it is. So there's so much you can do from a home mama doc standpoint, which is why, I mean, really all of part four in my book is teaching parents how to use acupressure points, homeopathy essential oils, herbal medicines, supplements for when kids are sick. And in the book, it's really the top 25 most common acute childhood conditions like sore throats hand foot of mouth, and strep or pink eye, we mentioned fevers, colds, coughs, vomiting, diarrhea, all the things that are super common and that your kids tend to get in the middle of the night. So if you have this resource, you can look at it. It also tells you when there are indications that you actually want to go to your doctor or maybe go to the ER. So that way you're not just left hanging. Is this okay to wait till the morning to call my doctor? Or maybe I should head into the ER right now.

Jodi Cohen: And you're not Googling and thinking they're going to die because I'll Google.

Elisa Song: Yeah, no, it's a way to avoid Dr. Google because Dr. Google, usually, sometimes it's helpful, but a lot of times it's not.

Jodi Cohen: Worst-case scenario thing. Yeah. I'm so excited for you. I'm so proud of you. This is so beautiful. Is there anything I didn't ask you that you'd like to share?

Elisa Song: Gosh. Well, so we spoke about the five things for microbiome magic and that children who have any chronic health concern, or even if they haven't been diagnosed, even if they haven't been diagnosed with any particular thing if you're like, I don't know if their worries are if they're in the normal realm or if maybe they have more going on or maybe the sensory issues or just getting sick really frequently. So there's nothing diagnosed, but you know that something's not a hundred percent, we can suspect that they have some element of gut problems, gut dysregulation. And so really part three of the book is all focused on how do you identify if your kids have this gut disruption. And more importantly, I'm not one to just spout out the scary facts. Sometimes you need a little jolt of awareness to realize, oh my gosh, our kids are not okay.

Elisa Song: What's happening right now is not okay. But then we can't just live in fear and doom and gloom and say, wow, this is our kids' destiny. So what I always provide as a pediatrician and really as a mom is, okay, now what can we do? And so that's where I also include my gut restoration program, the plan that I use in my practice. And even if you don't have an integrative or functional medicine pediatrician to work with, it's a starting point. You may still need to find one, but at least it's a starting point so that you can see the gut reset plan that I recommend for my patients. And you can incorporate some of those things and also know, okay, if things are getting a little better, but not all the way, when is it time to find a functional medicine practitioner?

Jodi Cohen: That's so great. I wish I had this when my kids were little. This is such a gift to so many moms. Thank you for everything you do. Thank you for putting this out in such a fun, happy color. Let people know where they can find you and where they can order the book.

Elisa Song: So you can find me most easily on my website. That's www.healthykidshappykids.com and on Instagram, that's Healthy Kids, Happy Kids. The book is available wherever books are sold pretty much. And you can find out more information at www.healthykidshappykids.com/book. And that lists many of the different places you can find it. And of course, most of us buy an Amazon, but if you have a local bookstore, support your indie bookstores. We got to love our brick-and-mortar bookstores too.

Jodi Cohen: This is amazing. It's full of really good topical application points for oils. You are amazing. Thank you. Thank you for joining me. Thank you for everything you do.

Elisa Song: Oh, thank you for having me.

Jodi Cohen: Thank you so much for listening. I hope this podcast empowered you with some useful information and takeaways. If you liked this episode, please consider sharing a positive review or subscribing. I would also love to offer you my free parasympathetic toolkit as a gift just for listening. It will teach you how to activate the most important nerve in your body to turn on your ability to heal. This free toolkit includes a checklist, a video, and a detailed guide. If this podcast prompted any questions, you can always find answers at my blog@vibrantblueoils.com or my book Essential Oils to Boost the Brain and Heal the Body. Until next time, wishing you Vibrant Health.