

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

269 The Things We've Normalized That Aren't Helping Our Health

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie Lefebure, your host. Life is remarkable, sometimes raw and always real. And some days we could use a little extra encouragement for our real lives. Here, you'll find that. Along with personal life impacting stories, helpful life hacks, timely inspiration, biblical insight, and a fresh perspective.

The Encouragement for Real Life podcast equips you to be a light in this world and to shine bright wherever God has you. I'm glad you're here today.

Think about this. Think of all of the things that we do every single day because they've just become normal. Like we sit for hours. In fact, I was just thinking before I signed on here, before I started recording, that I've been sitting way too long today.

We stay up too late. [00:01:00] We stare at our screens throughout the day, sometimes all day long. We grab something quick to eat because it's convenient. We live stress-filled lives. Our bodies are feeling the stress. We wake up tired and we joke about needing coffee before anyone can talk to us, right?

Do any of these sound familiar to you? A few do to me and none of them seem particularly unusual, right? They're, they're pretty common. And I think that there are a lot of things that we simply have accepted as normal because they are so common.

But today I invite us to pause and to ponder, to think about these things that have become so normal that we, we no longer question whether they're actually good for us. We just do 'em because that's what we're used to. But [00:02:00] usually normal and healthy aren't necessarily the same thing. In fact, sometimes they're the opposite.

So we are looking into this today in continuing in our series of Healthy Whole and Well, and this gnat continues to fly by my face. So if you're ready to be encouraged and inspired in your health today, let's get into this episode.

Well, welcome back to the Encouragement for a Real Life podcast. I am Julie, and yes, I've had this gnat flying around me and, um, I guess he wants to be on the podcast today too. But I'm excited to be here today, and we are continuing in our series this month of it's called Healthy, Whole, and Well. And what does it mean to be healthy, whole, and well?

We have talked a [00:03:00] lot, a lot about different, um, important aspects of health, , already this month. Uh, the first week was what does it mean to be well? The second week was when did taking care of ourselves get so complicated? So complicated. And last week we talked about why I pay attention to what I put in my body, um, my personal, preferences of what I do.

And so today we are looking at the things that we've normalized that aren't really helping our health. And maybe after today's episode, you and I will walk away with a fresh perspective and maybe with eyes open of really, what am I doing? What have I normalized that isn't healthy, and that I'm gonna make some changes? Maybe. I pray that that's the case today, that this really encourages your heart, so I'm so glad you're here.

You know, I wanna make sure I say up front that this episode isn't about [00:04:00] guilt. You know me, I, I-- We have enough things in our lives to feel guilty about that I never want you to come on and listen and, um, think I feel guilty about anything, because that's not my intention.

But it's an invitation. Today's episode is an invitation to notice what we've stopped noticing, out of convenience or out of ease or out of just 'cause that's what we do. That we just do all these things and we don't think about it. And so I've come up with six things that, uh, I believe that we've normalized that really aren't helping our health.

And so let's get into the first one right off the bat, and this one is running on tired. We've talked about this in various aspects before here , on the podcast, but there is a difference between occasionally being tired because maybe just life happens and regularly functioning without enough rest.

For [00:05:00] example, when my granddaughter, who's eight months old, when she spends the night, she, uh, will wake up sometimes in the middle of the night or early in the morning or, or early... What do I say? Early in the late night, around midnight, I'll just say. Well, -- the next day I'm tired because life has happened and, you know, and I, I love having her here.

Uh, that is different than functioning without enough rest. And I have, I have done that in the, the past. I have functioned without rest, and it's not a, a pleasant place to be. It is not a, um, fulfilling, , way to live. You know, staying up late because it's finally our time. Um, I remember my husband and I used to do that. Now we go, we go to bed, you know, fairly early. But, um, our time, you know, was after the kids went to bed.

Or scrolling instead of sleeping That's a big one for, for many of [00:06:00] us, and, um, that could affect our rest. I've also remember this, I'm-- I'll just say this, wearing exhaustion like a badge, like a badge. That you're like, "I'm so proud of myself because I'm doing so much that I'm exhausted." It's kind of a twisted way to look at, at, um, health that, you know, rewarding ourselves for being exhausted, and no, that, that's not healthy at all.

I do remember, um, someone in my past, I was listening to, um, someone speak at a conference once, and she said that every woman should be able to function on four hours of sleep. That, uh, I, I just really disagreed with her on that, and, uh, it was almost, um, it was almost a... I don't know. It's hard to put in words, but it... that's never left me. It's almost been like a, a thing that I just knew that was not right. And, [00:07:00] um, it's, you know, wearing exhaustion like a badge. If we , think we can get away with four hours of sleep a night, we know our body's gonna take a toll, our minds are gonna - suffer, our, our health will suffer. And so that's... We don't wanna, we don't wanna live that way. We wanna be, um, fully rested.

Or even just compensating with caffeine. I remember those days of just compensating. I was just like, I, um, "Caffeine will get me through the day," or, "Energy drinks will get me through the day."

Or assuming poor sleep is inevitable. We get to a certain age, and we just know we're not gonna sleep. Is that it? I don't know. Is it? Have we gotten so accustomed to being tired that we've forgotten what truly rested feels like? I wonder.

What if we just allowed ourselves to be fully rested? What if we gave that to ourselves as a gift this fall, this month? What if we did that? Honoring our [00:08:00] body's need for sleep rather than treating sleep as wasted time is, is a gift. Honoring our bodies with sleep. Sleep is not wasted time, and I sometimes I feel like it is. But I know, I know, I know God rested and I need to rest. Jesus rested and I need to rest. Yeah. That's one of the things I know I need to work on a little bit better is my rest.

So that's the first thing we've normalized. Running on tired.

The second is sitting our way through the day. This is me too. I've been sitting a lot today. This is-- This one is bigger than, than exercise, I think. You know, we can, we can exercise for 30 to 45 minutes and still spend the majority of our day sitting. And we think that that, that exercise for 30 to 40-- 45 minutes will take care of the sitting time. Is that really [00:09:00] true, though?

Think about it this way. We go from the bed to the breakfast chair to the car to the desk back to the car or maybe we go to lunch and sit at, sit at lunch. We go back to the car, we come home, we sit at the dinner table, we go to the couch, and then we go to bed. Is that, is that our life? Is that your life? Is that my life? All that sitting, all that stationary just staying in one spot. Is that, is that our lives now? Do we sit our way through the day?

I think this is something that we all need to just take a look at. Maybe you do fine with this, and I pray that that's the case. But I have really had to-- Writing my, writing my three books, [00:10:00] I intentionally, I realized that I sat way too long. I think I've talked about this before. Where I would just get my shoulders and neck and, you know, I would just get all cramped and tired and, and achy and, um, my back would start hurting and my legs would start swelling and I knew that I had to change some things when I was writing those books.

So I have intentionally incorporated movement into my days where I walk throughout my day. I need to do better at setting a timer and getting up, um, every hour at least. Some days I could be here for three hours and not move. That's not good. But I, I intentionally walk, I exercise. I, I walk on my walking pad. My walking pad is just on the opposite side of my desk here and it faces-- Mm-hmm ... you know, the opposite direction. Uh, but I, I do that. I walk and I can work at the same time.

These are some things that I've incorporated and maybe there's some things that you can incorporate to just get some movement in your day. I'm not [00:11:00] saying you have to do the same things I do, but I, um... It, it has made a, a big difference for me just to stay with the mindset of moving.

Another person I know, and I've tried this before, is she does, um, she does, uh, body squats. Just, just squats, 30 squats every half hour, every hour, something like that and just getting up standing next to her desk and just does body squats. There we go. It's some movement, getting movement into our legs.

So that's the other, that's the, that's the thing that I think that is just keeping that mindset that we want to be moving. 'Cause our bodies were made to move. Not just during a workout, mm-mm, but just throughout the day. Our bodies are made to move. And don't you feel better when you move? I know I do. So this is the second thing that we've normalized is just sitting through our day.

The third thing is choosing convenience over nourishment [00:12:00] and this connects with the, uh, um, last week's episode about the things that I, um, choose to put in my body. I'm, I'm choosing, more often than not, I'm choosing nourishment over convenience. Uh, I don't do it perfectly and I said that last week. But I'm not gonna spend much time of that here, but I understand how convenience has changed the way we eat and how easy it is for ultra-processed foods and added sugars and added fats and all of that stuff to become the bulk of, of the American diet without us even intentionally choosing that because it's out of convenience.

I'm not saying that packaged food is all bad, but I guess what, the question that I look at, that I ask myself is how much, how much of what I regularly eat is actually nourishing my body? And that, [00:13:00] that helps me make the decision.

So I, so I, I want to have it convenient, so I do some prep work in advance. So like for an example, um, at the beginning of the week, I may cook up like three pounds of hamburger for my husband and I to use throughout the week. I put in, um, a Crockpot. I, I put chicken in a Crockpot and, um, have that ready for, for meals throughout the week. I may make, um, hard-boiled eggs throughout the week, so like if I want a snack or something, or have cut up carrots, um, things that I can just easily access that will help me to choose nourishment over convenience. And if I have it ready, then it is convenient. So those are just some ideas.

But we don't need to be afraid of food at all. But I think we need to pay attention to it and truly, what are we putting into our bodies so they can be as healthy as possible? So that's the third one.

The fourth is living in a constant state of stress. [00:14:00] We are a stress-filled society, aren't we? Aren't we, I should say. We, we, um, we're constantly reachable. We- we're constantly getting notifications on our phones, on our devices. We see headlines. We get another email. Um, we tack on another responsibility. We, we, uh... Another thing that we think about, we just-- We, you know, we have constant things popping up that we're just constantly plugged in, and we're constantly on the go. We're constantly on the move. We

are, we are just living in a constant state of stress, and maybe it's that constant word. That maybe that's the thing that I'm noticing is that it's a constant thing.

When, uh, when my kids were younger, the stress was different. The stress was just, you know, making sure [00:15:00] everyone was needed, was where they needed to be at the time, and it, it wasn't like the stress of today where I had something on my brain all the time with technology, with notifications, with, you know, all of the stuff. It, it was just different back then.

Um, and so I think that we have sometimes just accepted this level of stress, that we've lived at this pace, we've lived at this level for so long that calm and peace actually feels strange. It feels uncomfortable. Do, do you know what I'm... Do you know what I mean? I, I think sometimes that when we do get a moment to ourselves, it's like, "Oh, what... why? Why am I..." You know, we kind of panic. "Why, why am I feeling calm for a minute?" Uh, because we're so used to this, this stress.

And we-- You and I know how stress impacts our [00:16:00] bodies. -- We've heard the stats. We've heard the, the studies done. We've heard how, you know, stress can be, um, you know, just as bad as what the things, the other things we can do to our bodies like I don't even know. But stress can just, just take a toll on our, our bodies, our physical bodies, our mental health, our emotional health, all of it. 'Cause, you know, like we talked in episode one, it's all connected. It can feel... It can just feel overwhelming. That stress can just feel overwhelming to the point that it makes us sick, physically sick.

When was the last time that your body and your mind were truly at rest? Now, I'm not saying asleep, but at rest. And, uh, your-- our b-bodies may be at rest, but what about our minds? What about our minds?

And that's one of the things that I continue to work on is [00:17:00] resting my mind. And the only way I can do that is by giving my thoughts over to Jesus. I give them my thoughts over to Him. And I, I ask Him often, "Take these thoughts. These are yours. Lord, help me to come back to them later if they're important. I rest in You. Give me Your complete rest," including mental rest. That's so important. So yeah, that's the fourth thing we've normalized is this, this stress.

Number five, uh, I would have to say is never giving our brains a break. And this is kinda what I'm just talking about. We, we never let our brains rest. We never give them a break. So this kind of piggybacks number four.

But, like, you are on your phone while you're eating. You're scrolling while you're eating. You know, you're, you're never just sitting there just enjoying your food. Uh, [00:18:00] you listen to a podcast while you're walking. You, um, you watch TV while you're folding laundry. That's me. Guilty. Or there's music always in the car or in the background of your house. Or you're scrolling while you're watching TV. That's another one. That's another one I get caught in doing like, "Oh, Lord, I don't need to have - my phone here and watching TV at the same time. I don't need that."

There's almost never nothing happening, right? And the irony of this isn't lost on me that I am saying this on a podcast. I am aware of this that you are-- The irony of what I'm just saying, that I'm telling you this while you're listening to me in your earbuds. I know that you are listening and you're doing something else. I, I assume that. Very rarely are any of us just sitting, listening to a [00:19:00] podcast and doing nothing else. I'm not saying that podcasts or phones are bad. I'm not saying any of that. But I think it's worth asking - ourselves, do our brains ever get quiet? Do we leave enough quiet in our lives to hear from God?

And that might be the most important thing. Because if we constantly have noise going on all the time, do we ever really hear from God? That's one of the things I do when I am out walking in the mornings. There's, there's been times that I am tempted to listen to a podcast while I'm out there. But I find such peace and the word serenity. I don't-- That just comes to me. Peace and calm and serenity when I am out there, just me and God and the big expanse of the sky, me on the road. And I just-- There's cornfields right now on either side of me. And I, I just love that time with God. And I, I carry my phone with [00:20:00] me for safety reasons. But I, I try not to do anything else while I'm out there. That's just me. I'm not saying you have to do that. But that's-- I try to just be with me and God. I wanna hear from Him.

Sometimes when I'm driving, I drive a lot, uh, more than anyone ever realizes. But I'm in the car a lot, and I always have been because we don't live, we don't live in a metropolitan area. We live in a rural area. So any-- Even going to the grocery store, I have to drive about 20, 25 minutes to get there. And I'm okay with that. But when I'm driving, I sometimes just drive in silence. I'm praying. I'm thinking. I sometimes just wanna let my mind just stop thinking for a while.

So sometimes it's the noise that keeps us from, from really having that peace that, that, uh, giving our brains a break from the noise. And I think that's something that we have all normalized. Maybe you haven't, and I [00:21:00]

hope that's not the case. But it's something worth looking at. So that's number five.

And number six is accepting not feeling well as normal That we have become accustomed to not feeling well. "Well, I'm exhausted, but that's just life." Or, "I'm, I'm really tired, but I guess that's just age. I don't sleep anymore, but it's menopause. I have no energy, but it's probably just because I'm getting older." Or, "Everyone feels this way."

Have you heard any of those lately or said any of those lately? I think that we have just accepted that we are not supposed to feel well, and I don't think that's true. I don't think that's true at all. I hear so many people say that they wake up and they just feel terrible, and that makes me really sad. [00:22:00] And I, I, I don't know sometimes what to say about that. And so often it's just followed up with a prayer. I pray for that person.

I'm not saying that every symptom that we have means that something is wrong, but our bodies change. Seasons change, which affects our bodies, and there are many reasons that we may not feel our best, like lack of sleep. Like when my daughter-- my granddaughter spends the night, I usually don't feel my best the next day because I know my sleep has been compromised. But, you know, that doesn't mean necessarily that anything's wrong. It's just that I didn't get enough sleep that night.

But persistent symptoms is what we wanna look at. They deserve attention. Instead of automatically accepting, "Well, I guess this is just my new normal now that I've turned this whatever age," maybe it's worth having a conversation with your healthcare provider about. [00:23:00] If something feels off, don't ignore it And I, for years, knew that something was off. I knew something was off in my body. And it wasn't until I... There's that gnat again. I'm gonna take care of him this week. I'm gonna take care of him. Don't know how, but I'm going to. Um, but it wasn't until a few years ago when I knew something was wrong with me. I knew that my st- I had stomach issues. I, uh, about once a month, I would just, my stomach would get really unhappy and, um, I knew something was wrong. And so I sought out a, uh, I think I've talked about this before, a functional, local functional doctor. And, uh, she-- we did a, a bunch of tests and I found that I had no good bacteria in my, [00:24:00] my stomach. None. From years of, of not caring for my, my stomach, my gut, whatever you wanna call it. Um, and so I, uh, we fixed that. I knew something was wrong because it, it kept reoccurring every month. Something wasn't right with my stomach. And sometimes it would feel like it's on fire. Well, no wonder.

So the thing is, next week, this functional doctor of mine, she is joining me on the podcast next week. And I can't wait for you to hear from her. We're gonna talk about a lot of different things regarding health. So just a little plug for that. She will be joining me next week on the podcast and it's, it's gonna be a great episode.

But back to these six. Which of these six made you squirm a little? Did any of them make you squirm? Maybe none of them did. Not a squirm to make you feel guilty and embarrassed like, "Ugh, I [00:25:00] feel like such a failure." No, not like that. But it's just something worth paying attention to. Maybe God is prompting you like, "This is what I want you to, to look at. I have this for you today." Maybe something like that, that God is just trying to, just to, to prompt you or nudge you. Maybe.

The thing is, we don't need to change all of these six things in one week. These are just six. There are so many other things that we have normalized that, uh, that we-- that really aren't helping our health. So many more things. So many things. These are just six.

And if none of these impact you, maybe there's something else in your life that you've normalized that really isn't helping your health. I don't know what it is for you, but I know that, I know that you're, you'll know. I know that God will show you, [00:26:00] and we're gonna pray about that in a minute.

But maybe tonight you go to bed instead of watching another episode, you just, you go to bed. Or you turn... If you have a TV in your bedroom, you turn it off and you go to sleep. Or maybe tomorrow you take a 10-minute walk after you eat your meal in silence. Maybe you put your phone down while you eat your lunch, and you just notice - how good your food tastes.

Or maybe you schedule that appointment that you've been putting off. You know something's not right. You don't really wanna find the answer yet, but you know something's not right, and you're gonna be brave, and you're gonna say, "I'm gonna, I'm gonna do this thing. I'm gonna, I'm gonna make that, that appointment that I've been thinking about.

One intentional choice is still a choice toward better health. It will always be one choice is a good choice towards better health, always. [00:27:00] Just one. Just one. That's it.

And I've been thinking about, you know, what, what verse Bible... I like to add a Bible, Bible verse, you know, to every episode. And what Bible verse would

be, would be appropriate, would, would fit in with this? And I, I thought of Romans 12:2. And Paul here wasn't talking about sleep and health and, and all of that, um, in this as he, as he said these words. But it's something that I think we can apply to our lives.

So this is what it says. Uh, Romans 12:2 in the New International Version. This is what it says: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing, and perfect will."

He wasn't speaking specifically of, of [00:28:00] sleep or screens or processed foods, not at all. But I think the important thing here that I kept coming back to was just to acknowledge a larger spiritual principle that Paul was referring to. As, as followers of Jesus, rarely do we - accept the thing, the saying that, well, if everyone does it, then that's gonna be our standard of how to live. We're gonna follow everybody else. No, we follow Jesus, not the crowd.

So what have I accepted? What have I accepted as normal that may not actually be helping me live well? What have I done to follow? How am I conforming to the crowd and doing what everyone else is doing that's really not helping my health? How am I conforming to the standards of this world when maybe Jesus is asking me to [00:29:00] conform to His standards?

I think that's the bigger picture here, is we've become accustomed to doing the things that everyone else is doing. Staying up late, running on tired, eating unhealthy food, um, you know, never giving our brains a, a break, all of those things. I believe that if we stop conforming to the ways of this world and keep our eyes on Jesus, that's our answer to, uh, dealing with some of these things and breaking, breaking the cycle of conforming and doing everything else that everyone else is doing.

What if we just went to Jesus and said, "Jesus, show me. What do I need to do? What, what, how do you want me to follow you instead of following what everybody else is doing or following what I've always done because it's convenient or because it's [00:30:00] It's just what I've always done. It's been common. It's normal for me. This normal may not be helping us be healthy.

Pray about that. Ask Jesus about that. That might just be the thing. I believe that's the answer.

So let's pause here right now. Let's pause here right now and pray, and just ask Jesus to show us what this is, what, what we can do -- so we don't conform,

keep doing the same thing we've always done that's really not helping us with our health. Let, let's do that.

Heavenly Father, I just... Oh, I thank You for, um, this opportunity and this subject that we're talking about. Lord, so many things have become just normal in our lives and common in our lives. And I, I see as I, uh, as I list them and I talk about them, these, just these six things, Father, that they really aren't helping our health. But yet we do them because maybe we've always done them.

Lord, maybe You're just trying to shake [00:31:00] things up for us, that You're trying to wake us up to the reality that You have something better for us. As John 10:10 says, you know, You came to give us an, a life with abundance or an abundant life. And, Lord, these things are pulling us away from an abundant life. Absolutely they are.

Lord, we want to follow You. We want to follow Your ways and Your, Your plans and purposes for our lives. And I don't believe, as I look at these, I don't believe that they are Your plans and purposes for our lives. You have something better.

And so, Lord, I ask that, Jesus, I ask that You would show each one of us through the power of the Holy Spirit, show each one of us one area, one thing that You want us just to maybe do different, that You want us to focus on something else, to have a different perspective of or just to trust You in even more. Show us what that is today, tomorrow, this week sometime. We [00:32:00] don't wanna do this life. We don't wanna miss any part of it. We don't, we don't wanna miss you in it. This beautiful life that You have for us to live, we want to just live it the way You want us to.

And so, Lord, help us be healthy and whole and well. Help us to do the things that you want us to do that will glorify You in our health. Just thank You for this time. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the one listening today. Encourage her heart. We love You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thanks for praying with me. It's always a joy to do that together.

And as I already mentioned just a, a, a few minutes ago, or maybe a minute ago, next week we are closing out our Healthy, Whole and Well series for the month, and I cannot believe it's gonna be the end of the month, but here we are.

I am bringing in, as I mentioned, someone who knows far more about all of this health stuff than I do. And so, [00:33:00] as I mentioned, my guest is Dr. Tanya

Teggatz. Uh, she is my functional medicine hormone expert doctor, and we are gonna be talking about all the things, specifically about women's health and hormones and some of the things that we often assume that we just have to live with that maybe we don't.

It's gonna be a very interesting and uplifting episode, and I, I... You're gonna love it. I know you will. So I cannot wait for you to hear this conversation. So when you show up, have a notebook ready if you can. You might wanna take some notes. . It's gonna be, it's gonna be... It, it's just gonna be great.

So, uh, one last thing, though, before you go. If today's episode encouraged you, would you just do me a quick favor? Would you, uh, just think of one woman who might need this, this reminder today about health and wholeness and wellness? ... Maybe she's just struggling with a lot right now, and she's, she's trying [00:34:00] to, to figure out her life and what she's struggling to see the good right now in her health. And she just doesn't know where to go, what to do, where to turn to. She, she doesn't know how to begin. And, uh, or maybe she just wants to be well, but she really doesn't understand how to go about doing that. Would you text this episode with, to her or send it to her on social media, through social media, even share it on your own social media? You never know how God might just use a simple act of encouragement to remind another that her life and her health are important.

And if today's conversation resonated with you, I would love to hear from you. Send me a message, or you can even leave a review. And if you're feeling extra - generous, you can tell me what, what spoke to your heart about this episode or maybe what's that area of health that you just really feel like God is saying, "Hey, look at this. I want, I wanna show you this." Your comments matter to me and I, um, I sure appreciate them and I appreciate you so very [00:35:00] much. They encourage me more than you know.

So thank you for being here. Thank you for being here each week. It truly means so much to me and I look forward to our time together each time. So until next week, stay encouraged and keep your eyes on Jesus. God bless you.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at julielefebure.com. And until next time, stay encouraged.