

**DR. KEESHA EWERS:** Welcome to the Women's Vitality Summit, everybody. This is Dr. Keesha Ewers, your host. I am so excited to introduce you to Sarica Cernohous who is a national certified practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine and Chinese herbal medicine. She is also a practicing Japanese style acupuncturist.

Sarica is an instructor on traditional food preparation methods through her program called Fresh, Fun and Flavorful in the Funky Kitchen. She is the author of *The Funky Kitchen: A Compilation of One Soccer Mom's Favorite Traditional Food Techniques and Recipes*.

Welcome to the Summit, Sarica. I am so excited to talk to you.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** I am so happy. Thank you so much. It is a joy to be here.

**DR. KEESHA:** Well, I know that this is a subject that we both share, that is near and dear to our hearts in common, and that is the vitality of the human race. We both have daughters and we both want to make sure that all the generations of women and girls on this planet are being cared for and that they are caring for themselves in a really natural healthy way.

So I want to start with the traditional definition of vitality; it means life, it means energy, spirit, vivacity, exuberance, buoyancy, balance and sparkle.

I have a private practice and you also have a private practice and you practice Chinese medicine, so I would love to hear what you see in your practice that is the opposite of vitality for women. What is this sucker of vitality that you see?

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** You know, I have the good fortune, and I'm sure you do too in your practice, of being able to see females of different age ranges. Often I'll see the mom and the daughter and sometimes the grandma too.

I think for the younger people, what I see a lot of is anxiety, that they're maybe not doing things right. I do think that is part of growing up, as

you know, to wonder "Am I doing things right?" But it's this deeper pervasive presentation of this. So in younger people, that is something that I bumped into a lot in my practice.

Helping those girls and their families to come up with, not only something that we are going to do for them that day to help them relax and get into more parasympathetic relaxing response override in their nervous system, but also looking at what we can do that are small changes to how we approach potentially stressful situations, whatever they may be. That can be a different trigger for everybody, so identifying what those things are and then coming up with useful plans on how to work with that. I don't need to go into details if you don't want me too.

What it comes back to is just helping that young girl to keep herself in the present moment and to recognize that so many of the things that we think are scary are things that either happened in the past or may possibly, but probably are not, going to happen in the future.

When we bring ourselves back to present moment, we realize "Actually at this moment, everything really is okay. I am breathing, the sun is shining, everything is okay."

A little thing that I work with a lot with their moms because I want their moms to be in there on the conversation too so that we can triangulate on recognizing when these things are happening.

Then everybody is a team and they can say "Hey, it is okay." For instance, maybe give the direction like "Just look down at your hands, take a breath and realize I am right here, everything is okay."

Actually, that is a big thing for grown-ups too, for the moms, because so much of what we do as parents and as women is we have that capacity for future planning. That is really one of the great things that women are capable of doing, I think, very well. We are designed for that because there are so many different aspects of living that we are here to take care of. We really are that family.

Even when I get a sense of overwhelm, "Oh my Gosh. I've got this to do and that to do." When we can come back to that present moment, even as a grown-up, that also is something that gives us back a tremendous amount of vitality because we really do recognize at this moment, pretty much everything is okay.

So to me, it is the worry and the anxiety, even multi-generationally, I see people being pulled. So with very simple little tools like that, and then of course, keeping yourself well nourished is a good response to that as well. But I would say that that kind of override of worry is such an energy sucker for women.

**DR. KEESHA:** I love what you are saying because I think anxiety and depression are both a lot what I see also. We say anxiety is worry about what is in the future and depression is ruminating on what was in the past. If you are in the present moment then you can alleviate both. I think that is so lovely.

Think about it, if you are sitting there watching a beautiful sunset and the vistas are just breathtaking, all the colors are there and you are noticing it all, then you have a thought that comes in and takes you out of that, it can destroy the entire vista and the entire moment for you and cause your whole body to respond. When it responds like that, of course, hormones go awry because you are in that alarm system of fight-or-flight when you get into anxiety.

So I would love to have you to talk about what you tell women and how you guide them with food, because I think mindful eating or being in the present moment when you eat is also very important, right?

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** This is an exercise that I learnt when I was studying Chinese medicine. It's an exercise in thinking about a lemon. Lemons are so tart, they've got such a ... profile about them.

I think people sometimes don't honor the power of mind and its effect on our physiology, so we'll do this exercise with everyone listening. I want you to close your eyes. I want you to think about a lemon and get a knife and I want you to slice into that lemon and cut a wedge out of it.

Then I want you to take that wedge and I want you to put it in to your mouth. Now, what is happening to all of us? There is no lemon here. There is no lemon in our mouth. But everybody is salivating.

**DR. KEESHA:** I am drooling right now. Stop it.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** It is such a good exercise because there is no lemon, but it does have this tremendous profound physiological effect. That is the power of the mind right there.

Likewise, if we come to a meal and we are hurried and we are not even really that hungry. We don't know what we want to eat because again, we're really not that hungry and our mind is elsewhere. What is going to be happening?

At a physiological level everything that needs to happen for us to digest that meal in a proper format is not going to be there. Part of really enjoying a meal is all of that physiological response that comes when we smell something and its enticement. We see something visually that looks really tasty to us. Then, of course, we taste it. There are such a lot of processes going on before that food actually even hits our stomach.

So if we can engage these processes by being aware of what we have in front of us and actually feeling some hunger around that, eating food that is appealing to us, what we are going to be doing is we are going to be setting the stage for a proper hydrochloric acid let down, which is a big part of the digestive juice in our stomach. That is going to help us break down minerals and protein. Everything is functioning in the right way, setting up the mood so that as we continue to digest that meal, it's going to be in its right format for the next phase of digestion as it goes through the small intestine and into the large intestine.

When we come to a meal in a mindful way, approach it in that moment in a mindful way, enjoy it for the taste, texture and the experience of what it is, that is really going to enhance the bio-availability of what it is we put in front of us.

I've heard of everything of what the day looks like around food and snacks and whatever the thing maybe. But I circle back around to breakfast. Because if we can make some good healthy food at breakfast time, what we're going to be able to do is we're going to be able to stabilize that person's blood sugar for the rest of the day, so that they have more mental clarity and more ability to handle more change when they're ready for the next phase of change. I really do like to start with breakfast and I would encourage everybody to do that.

Let's take a step back. A very common practice in the United States for people when they first wake up in the morning is to go out and have a cup of coffee or two. Oftentimes, they add a sweetener or half of creamer or something in there.

If that's how folks are starting their day, they're going to be getting up immediately. But what's going to happen is they're going to be on a rollercoaster for the rest of the day.

If we can make a change with that behavior – and Keesha I know you're more hardcore about it than I am – I'll let them keep the coffee, but I want them bringing it into at least a meal. I want them to reduce the amount they're drinking. I'd like them to take the sugar out.

But even if we could stabilize the blood sugar more by first having food and then a little bit of coffee with that meal, that for people who aren't ready, they'd go crazy with taking out coffee.

I love your commitment to it. It's so good. But it's that middle ground, being able to meet somebody somewhere so we can make a change and that there are benefits to doing so. They don't have a 4:00 pm slump where they feel like they're going to die if they don't have a snack or take a nap.

It's how we can start to slowly but surely make this tiny little inroads and then build upon that momentum.

**Dr. Keesha Ewers:** I tell you what, the only reason I'm hardcore about coffee is because it does cause inflammation and I used to have autoimmune disease. I had a big misery to motivation ratio.

I see a lot of my patient population for autoimmune diseases. They come in to see me and they don't even know that until we've done the kind of testing I do, and then they find out.

I have discovered a lovely new product out there, it's called Capomo. It tastes like coffee. You brew it like coffee but it's fantastic.

It doesn't have antioxidants in it, but it doesn't have the acid in it either and it doesn't have caffeine. It doesn't give that the acidity to the body first thing in the morning.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** For sure. Yes, say that again so everybody knows it.

**DR. KEESHA:** It's C-a-p-o-m-o. I have no material investment and anything with Capomo. In fact, I just buy it on Amazon like everyone else.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** Awesome. That's such a good thing because folks generally like that warm feeling in the morning. Absolutely, that's awesome.

**DR. KEESHA:** You can bulletproof it if you have the right body type for bulletproofing your coffee. You can do that with the ghee in it.

If you're needing to have that grounding and you're like very skinny mini energy that you get spun up if you don't get that good cube of butter every day.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** That's right, three times a day. It's true. Some of us really do need that. Again, part of the art of this type of medicine is looking at who the person is in front of you. It's not going to be the same fit for everyone.

**DR. KEESHA:** Exactly. I'd look like an Oompa Loompa if I put a lot of butter on my food like you do. I've got to have lots and lots of dandelion greens for my body type.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** Exactly. Keep that liver moving.

**DR. KEESHA:** That's right, exactly. I think that's a great idea for the women who are listening to this or people who have their women to make sure you go through and you just look at your day and go from beginning to end and find those places and start with a great breakfast.

One of the things that I've seen, and one of the things I love about Ayurveda and Chinese medicine, is it looks at the whole system. We're not just a physical body. We also have an energetic body called "chi" in Chinese medicine or "prana" in Ayurveda.

We have the emotional, the mental, the wisdom body. In Ayurveda, we talk about the "bliss chi" or the last part of us which has joined with everyone else's and that's our collective unconsciousness as humans.

We can actually access all the wisdom of the universe through that space if we are able to sit every day for long enough to get our thoughts to calm and if we are not toxic in all those layers.

A place you could become toxic is in your mind and then your emotions and that will also prevent you from getting to that ultimate vitality and bliss and being able to have access to all of the wisdom of the universe.

One of the things that I love to think about is how we as parents can influence our children to help them be really feel safe enough to express their vitality in their unique way, so that they can come into adulthood with the desire to express themselves in that sparkling way that I was talking about the beginning of the show.

I think that that's a choice that we make, whether or not to be happy in any given moment.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** I totally agree. Especially as adults, I think that there is that cognizance. That even we can be so angry or so upset about

something that we have that awareness of “Wait a minute, I’m still making a choice to be here.”

I think back when I was a kid and I didn’t grasp that. And quite honestly, my family, they were awesome in many ways, but I wouldn’t say that that would have been a discussion point that we would have had.

I think that as adults, as we watch our children and the children in our lives, we need to help them to garner that awareness, that self-awareness within themselves. “You know what? You’re upset but let’s look at this together.”

I’m not saying you should stop your emotions. But it is important to see how it is that we react to things and really look at that a little bit more deeply.

I think engaging in that conversation as the parents or the role models in these children’s lives, that’s such an important thing to do. Because there is so much about the way we live in the modern culture that is mindless.

I remember when I was a child and moving into being a teenager, it was this total MTV generation and I would just park it for hours and watch videos. My parents were self-employed and they were busy.

I look at my kids and now, with on-demand cable and this sort of thing, it could just go on and on and on and you never get a break from it. Then when you get tired of that, there’s the Internet and all of the things that you can dip into.

This structure of not using one’s imagination is so rich in the society that we live in now. I think to stop that, putting time limits on what these different types of screen experiences are, to me that is paramount. That is so important.

Then when things are alright again, creating that discussion point around “Let’s look at this a little bit more deeply. What was going



on? Why did you get so worked up?” Maybe not at that moment, but as you take a moment, a little while later to look back on that.

I know out of my two children, my son, he is the one that is more prone to being on the screens. If I take him off of those screens abruptly, he’s not ready to come off. I need him to do something, whatever the thing maybe. The anger and frustration that comes out of him is beastly. It’s incredible.

These screens really do seem to do something to the brain that is not what we’re designed to handle in a healthy way. I think not having too much of that exposure is such an important thing.

I will not sit here and beat up the screens. I’m kind of doing that because I really do think that that’s a big part of people not expressing themselves in a healthy way and learning to create these neuronal tracts within their brain of self-soothing where they know how to handle the stresses in their life.

I think that we really do have a generation coming up here that is going to have some challenges with all of that unless they have adults who are going to be those stopgaps and touch them, creating space for reflection and discussion around what makes that person tick.

**DR. KEESHA:** I think that’s really good. Then, of course, movement is really important for children, and as you’re saying, planting your bottom and just watching the screen doesn’t allow for that.

What about dietary choices? If we’re feeding kids snacks all day after soccer, after sports, after school and sending them to school with snacks, what are some great snack ideas that you have?

What about the working woman who is going to take food with her to work? What are some snack ideas?

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** The thing about snacks is I think we’re better off without them. I mean that for kids as well. I really do feel like if somebody is needing a snack, then that means they didn’t eat nutrient-densely

enough at their meal. I'm not a fan of snacks and it drives me crazy.

Take my son right now. I could not believe the junk that came home with him the night before last. It was like four things of garbage. And I'm a parent who cares about these things.

Then my husband and I are in the van saying “Look, we’re not saying you can't have a treat but you're not eating that because that is garbage. That is just poison for your body. We will go home. After dinner, you can have a small scoop of organic ice cream. You did a great job on the game tonight.”

I'm not saying don't have a treat ever. It should be after a meal so that the body can buffer the sugar. For most kids a treat would be a sugary treat. So it shouldn't be something that has an ingredient list you simply cannot pronounce. With organic ice cream, depending on what you're getting, it's going to have probably five or six ingredients. A small amount of that, especially for our wiry family, is fine. We all handle it, no problem.

To me, instead of snacks, let's get better at eating breakfast, lunch and dinner. That really is my answer.

**DR. KEESHA:**

It's a good answer because I remember having the same discussions. I'm 51 now, and my youngest is 19 years old. When I was the snack mom for post-sports, I would bring homemade treats. I would not take the garbage stuff, I would say the same thing.

I remember one particular instance being asked to contribute to the bake sale for the band at the high school when my daughter was 16 and writing to the band teacher, who assigned me to bring soda pop, and saying “Look I don't mean to be difficult but I don't buy this in my family and I'm certainly not going to buy it for anyone else's family. If I don't think it's good for my children, I'm not poisoning other people's children.” He looked at my daughter and

showed her the email and said “Is this for real?” She said “Indeed, it is.”

He thought it sounded so sanctimonious. I said “I’m happy to bring something else that’s healthy. I’ll bring a treat. It’ll be sweetened with coconut sugar or stevia. I’m very happy to do something different but I’m not buying soda. You might want to just assign that to someone else who’s a little less difficult to deal with.”

He gave me something else to bring, and lo and behold, Sarica, he dropped 150 pounds after that. I think because he started looking into what I had said about high fructose corn syrup.

He had two small children and a back problems and I never said anything about maybe your own weight would benefit from this. I didn’t say anything like that, but he actually said “Let me just see what she’s saying.” He started living a better lifestyle and dropped all his weight. No more back pain. He works out in the gym. He doesn’t let his kids eat that way now.

It’s remarkable what this one boundary setting did. Saying “I’m really sorry” – it just changed his life and had a ripple effect on other people. I think that’s a really good thing that we can do. Because the school system definitely doesn’t seem to be on the side of nutritious, healthy kids.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** It isn’t and it’s such a tremendous shame. I remember being the skinny fat kid, you know what I’m saying? Even though I was skinny, I had no muscle tone.

It was one of those things – again it’s not that compared to other families we lived around. My parents really taught us well but it was still was not what I feed my kids. It’s a learning process. They really felt they were doing very well by us.

I was lethargic all the time as a kid. I look at my kids and they’re not that way and it’s because they’re running on high octane fuel. Because they are running on high octane fuel, their minds are

really strong and sharp, but they're not fanatical. My kids are not kids that are difficult to be around, but they are firing on all cylinders. I'm very grateful for that.

There's an engagement that you are able to have when you have good fuel that you're running on. It took me a good portion of my life, even being a natural healthcare practitioner for many years, to really start to get a grip on what that meant. Now, if I have a day where my energy is in the pot or if I'm feeling maybe depressed about something, all of those are such huge markers to me of "What the heck have I been doing that today I feel like this?"

This matters a lot. It matters a lot for kids and their ability to be able to handle the rigors of what we ask of them – learning, socializing, sports and that sort of thing.

I think that forever it seems, at least in the culture I've grown up in, that people treat kids almost like "They can handle it. We can feed them whatever and they'll be fine." That's not true. They would be doing so much better if we would feed them better.

Since I've been very aware of this, it surprises me so much how it is that people have that kind of attitude of "Oh it's just for the kids. Let's get them the fried chicken tenders and they can dip it in ranch sauce."

It's crazy to me that that's how we are building their bodies because we're not. We're creating inflammation in these children at a very young age. Their brains are not functioning as optimally and their body does not have the building blocks that it needs to be as strong as it could be.

We see kids needing things like glasses and braces and tubes in their ears and that's because they don't have the mineral content that their body needs to allocate resources. That's a whole other discussion, but I just want to say that it really matters. It really matters what we feed our kids.

**DR. KEESHA:** It does. When you said when you're having down, more lethargic days, you ask yourself "I wonder what I did?" You're taking responsibility for your own energy level which leads me to that idea that you're really passionate about helping people tap into their own intrinsic wisdom. So talk a little bit about that.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** That is something that we all do have and it has become blunted in all of us. It's become blunted and hurt. We get signs all the time. Sometimes we really don't want to listen to them. That's very common.

I grew up listening to the commercials on TV like "Calgon, take me away!" And all these pain reliever commercials saying "I don't have time for the pain."

The pain is there because it's telling you that you have got to change what you're doing. It can be emotional pain. It can be physical pain. It can be a sense of energy drain. There are so many ways that our body communicates to us. What do we do? We respond with sledgehammer responses rather than really looking at why something's happening.

Something that, when I was studying traditional Chinese medicine, was very apparent to me early on was "Wow, this is so completely different to the Western medical model which is you have a symptom." It's not about "Let's be reflective and see why this is happening."

I'm kind of throwing the baby out with the bath water there. I don't mean to be so dismissive because there are plenty of good things about Western medicine. But when it comes to really being reflective and seeing what the deeper meaning is behind something, that's not the forte of modern biomedicine. That quiet place within us that is really hard to access unless every day we build it into our lives.

There are so many ways that we keep ourselves distracted –TV shows, the screens, Facebook, it's everything. Then if we feel a

little something, well maybe we'll take an anti-depressant for this, or a little Ibuprofen for that. The list goes on and on of what people do without really taking care of themselves, like getting to the root of the issue.

We're designed to do that. That's how we got here as a species; we had to respond in kind to what was happening so that we could continue to keep the species going forward.

**DR. KEESHA:** The thing that Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine both teaches is that your body is giving you feedback when you have symptoms that are outside of the norm.

It teaches us to look at our tongue, our fingernails, the lines on our faces, our bowel movements, our urine, our skin and our energy levels. If those energy levels are low, if you're not feeling vital, it's a feedback mechanism from your body saying "I need attention."

The more vitality that we've lost, the more drained we feel, the louder our bodies are having to scream to get our attention. Do we really want to be in a shouting match with the body?

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** Not at all, and especially us women. When we look at the essence of what a woman is, we're that energetic, fiery, young energy that men are. Men have feminine qualities within them and women have male qualities within them. But when you parse it out, women are the softer, more reflective, the quieter of the two types of human being. As a result of that, it's important that we do what we can to nurture that aspect of who we are.

When we are in the shouting match that you're talking about there Keesha, we're not honoring who we are in any way. It's such a brutalizing thing that we do to ourselves and to our relationship with the people in our life because we're not living with integrity at that point.

Everything goes unfiltered when that happens. Then you're starting to just try and close up all the holes in the dam with a little duct

tape here and there. Before you know it, you can't hold it back anymore.

That's when people get into being completely wiped out. Emotionally and physically they break down because there's only so much of that we can deal with.

**DR. KEESHA:** And that's when we see them.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** Yes. That's when we see them, exactly. That's when they come in and we've got to tame them. They're really ready to make those changes.

I think in my own health journey, it would have been so much easier if I'd really looked at my diet and what I was doing to myself when I was a teenager and I needed to have my appendix removed but I didn't. The next thing you know, it's pancreatitis in my gall bladder. It continued and continued.

Finally, I started listening. It would just been easier, had I listened earlier, but I wasn't paying attention to myself.

**DR. KEESHA:** I hear you sister. You're preaching to the choir.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** I feel you girl.

**DR. KEESHA:** Rheumatoid arthritis, lost my tonsils, gave up my gall bladder – before I knew any of that stuff. Then you learn it and you start taking responsibility. So we're saying to our listeners right now "You don't have to do what we did."

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** No you don't. Please don't.

**DR. KEESHA:** One of the tools that you give is you have a webinar series. I want you to talk about that. We're in our last couple of minutes here. I know you also are providing a bonus for our listeners.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** Sure. The class that I do is around these traditional food preparation methods. You had mentioned that at the beginning; it's

Fresh, Fun and Flavoful in The Funky Kitchen. It's a six module course.

I also do it live about once a year but if someone can't make it during that time, no problem. I always have it in archive format. The website is [funkykitchenfresh.com](http://funkykitchenfresh.com).

That is fantastic because even if it's not a live time when I'm running it, I always stay in contact with the people who come into the program during the year and as well on Facebook. I put them into our Facebook groups.

It's just a very cool community of people who really keep working with these methods so I love that. That's the one thing.

Related to that is a little e-book. That's going to be my gift to everybody and it's on making yogurt. It's actually, in many ways, it's kind of a portion of my book The Funky Kitchen. It's how to make yogurt at home or even if you're working with just plain yogurt, some recipe ideas around that. Making yogurt at home was the first thing I did around traditional food preparation so it's near and dear to my heart. That's the kind of what all that is.

**DR. KEESHA:** I'd love for you to tell us what you would say is the most important strategy that women can implement to get their vitality sizzling again.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** I know it sounds silly but can I say a few things? It would be really looking at your breakfast. And then at the end of the day, a good sleep pattern. Setting yourself up for a good night's sleep.

At breakfast time, we got to get some veggies. We got to get some proteins to that breakfast for you. We need something that's going to be substantial and whole. Let's not start the day off with a big blast of caffeine. That's how we start the day.

And then we finish the day by setting ourselves up with good rest. Don't be looking at your screen until the evening. Start toning



down the lights in your house. Make it nice and cool and quiet and dark in your bedroom.

Journal, make love, do these sort of things so that you really get your body into a relaxed state for a good night's sleep because that's going to set you up energetically for the next day. Starting the day right and finishing it right.

**DR. KEESHA:** Wonderful. Sarica, thank you so much. I would love for you to give us your website so people can find you.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** Absolutely. My blog is [naturallylivingtoday.com](http://naturallylivingtoday.com). Folks can definitely find me there – [naturallylivingtoday.com](http://naturallylivingtoday.com).

**DR. KEESHA:** It was a pleasure. I so appreciate you coming on and sharing your wisdom with everybody.

**SARICA CERNOHOUS:** Thank you Keesha. Blessings to everybody. Thank you so much.