

Podcast 444: National Family Health and Fitness Day

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: It's a toxic world, but we can strive to have the best, healthiest environment, lifestyle that we can, and it's worth it. Totally worth it.

Julie Walker: Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, "IEW." My name is Julie Walker, and I'm honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Julie Walker: So my introductory paragraph for our podcast today starts with a story. Would you like to hear the story?

Andrew Pudewa: I always like a good story.

Julie Walker: Okay, well this is the story of

Andrew Pudewa: As long as it starts out with once upon a time.

Julie Walker: Okay, I better start over. Once upon a time, actually this is in modern times because he's still alive, Sir Richard Branson. So he's an English businessman.

Andrew Pudewa: We know of him.

Julie Walker: Yes, he is the founder of Virgin Group, and he owned 400, more than 400 businesses, all related to, well, all that he's interested in.

Andrew Pudewa: He's got Virgin Airlines, he's got Virgin Records. I don't see how those are very connected, but nevertheless,

Julie Walker: He's a very busy man.

Andrew Pudewa: I would like to ask him, why Virgin? What was it that caused you to want to use that word?

Julie Walker: He did decide at a very young age that he wanted to be an entrepreneur. So I don't know, maybe something happened in his life. We don't know.

Andrew Pudewa: no, I mean, but anyway, go on with your story.

Julie Walker: We were literally, before we turned the mics on, we're talking about, young people sacrifice their time for money. They're putting in a lot of their time to build their business.

Andrew Pudewa: And the related stress and health consequences of that.

Julie Walker: Exactly,

Andrew Pudewa: Sleeping, not enough, et cetera.

Julie Walker: Exactly. And so Richard Branson basically has two pieces of advice that he himself ascribes to, and that is spend time with family and being able to take time off. And he not only advocates this for himself, but for those that work for him so that they're healthier, so that they're going to perform better. And I just thought, well, this is an appropriate lead into, oh, and part of this time off that he makes sure that he exercises every day. Whether it's a game of tennis or run or swim, that is a priority to him. And you're thinking, well, of course, he's a multimillionaire. He can afford all these luxuries, no, but this was something that was a part of who he was from the beginning that he wanted to be sure that he was spending time focusing on health and exercise, which I thought was a good story as we introduce our topic today, which is— today, Andrew, is September 25th, and it is National Family Health and Fitness Day.

Andrew Pudewa: Well I wonder who pushed that through whoever you push it through to get a national day. Could anybody declare a day or does it have to go through the government or something?

Julie Walker: It's on, it, there we go, National Family Health and Fitness, and I thought, I...

Andrew Pudewa: I think we should get a National Structure and Style in Writing Day. Can't we do that?

Julie Walker: I think that's every day, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Okay.

Julie Walker: But I know that you have been. on a health and wellness journey, especially since COVID. I have known you for, I could almost say, Andrew, I've known you for decades. Not quite. No, actually I have. And I have always known you to eat in a healthy manner. I've always known you to value family time. But I would say over the last five years or so in particular, this has been something that has been very important to you. And I just thought it would be fun for our listeners to hear a little bit of your story about why health and fitness is now so important to you.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I'm blessed with a wife who always fed me good food. So whenever I was home, we ate organic, tried to get naturally raised meat. We just didn't do a lot of packaged foods. We weren't an “eat dessert every day” kind of family. So I was half in that good zone. And I was also working and traveling a lot. I traveled 80 to 100 days a year pretty

much since you've known me, even since before that building IEW – serving, working, and I'm still traveling quite a bit. This past season was maybe a little over scheduled, but I love it. I love it. But what would happen for me is when I was traveling, it would be restaurants and fast food and whatever you could get. And then when I was on my own in need of comfort food, I could easily buy a pint of chocolate cookie dough Haagen Dazs or something and just eat the whole thing.

I had over the years and I think it happens to a lot of Fathers because if they have a wife who feeds them well, then they've got kids. There's always leftovers Plus you're working a lot. So you like the midnight snack And so I just had gained a good amount of weight although I would never have considered myself obese. I knew I was carrying around a lot of extra weight.

And I started to kind of also become aware that I was getting older. For a while, you can pretend you're not, right? So I don't know, from about 40 to 55 or so, you feel like you're in a holding pattern. You start to wear some glasses to read with, and then you can't quite beat your son. But he's growing up, so you're not getting worse, he's just getting stronger.

But then COVID hit, and really my life changed so radically because I didn't go anywhere for 16 months. I have never, I'd never ever done that.

Julie Walker: You were in the middle of a homeschool convention in Texas.

Andrew Pudewa: They canceled it on Friday night and drove home Saturday and that was the end of it. So, I had all this kind of time, I was at home, our youngest daughter had left, so my wife became kind of uninterested in cooking because there were no kids to cook for. So she kind of would cook what she would eat, and then I would kind of cook. And so I started cooking more, and then that got me into the nutritional value. And I would recommend a fantastic book, the first one I read was called *Eat to Beat Disease* by Dr. William Li. And I just love this book. And I wasn't diagnosed with some horrible disease, oh no I have to beat it.

But it was kind of like, I would like to avoid getting a horrible disease.

And he went through all of the body's systems. So, the respiratory system, the neurological system, the cardiovascular system. The different organ systems, and I think there were five, and then he just talked about which foods had which nutrients that would support which systems.

Julie Walker: Oh, interesting.

Andrew Pudewa: So it was very nicely organized, and then in the back were a bunch of recipes, and I thought, oh, Purple potato soup. I didn't even know purple potatoes existed., but purple potatoes, in fact all purple foods, contain certain phytonutrients that no other foods contain. And since I am not a fan of eggplant, I was thinking, well what's purple? potatoes! So I found purple potatoes, I don't know, Sprouts or Whole Foods or something.

And I made this purple potato soup and I thought, wow, that's pretty good. So I just, with my extra time and not traveling, I started cooking and one thing led to another. I started learning about the problems with oils, vegetable and seed oils that most people would use and how those can be so damaging.

Julie Walker: My husband had a question about seed oils. And I understand seed oils would include vegetable oil, canola oil, sunflower seed oil, safflower, but what about sunflower seeds?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, you see the problem isn't in the sunflower seed so much as it's in the processing of that in order to make the oils.

Julie Walker: And I told him, I said, I'm pretty sure the seeds are okay, but I will ask

Andrew Pudewa: Well, it's like corn. Good organic, wholesome corn—great. But when you take corn and you refine it into high fructose corn syrup, you've stripped out all the nutrients that allow your body to absorb that. Same thing with corn oil or soybean oil or canola oil. You're stripping out all of the nutrients that would allow you to absorb that oil, so your body just can't deal with it, and it causes inflammation and all sorts of problems.

Anyway, so I was learning about that. And then also I was talking to my son who was getting his first opportunity to be a personal trainer in a gym. And I kind of said, well, if you'll do that, I'll be your first client. And he said, “You would never do that” because I'd only had bad mouth gyms like they're horrible, stinky, ugly, fluorescent light, lots of really bad loud music with cocky, obnoxious people. Why would anyone ever go into a place like that? And he said, “You'd never do it.” And I said, “Well, I will. If you go ahead and get your certification, I'll be your first client. I'll go twice a week for three months.” I think that was what I promised. So I was trying to help him kind of get motivated, and I don't know if that was motivating or not, but he did do it, and then I had to, to keep my word. And I hated it so bad.

I was walking around, I was just sore all the time and I also kind of started getting into the intermittent fasting idea because I had listened to another brilliant guy on YouTube, Jason Fung, who wrote the complete book of fasting. And I was so convinced about the health benefits plus I knew I could lose a few pounds and that wouldn't be bad either.

So all of these things just converged and so after, I don't know, maybe nine months, I was sitting in my office, it was maybe 3:30, and I just thought, I am so done, I do not want to look at another screen, I've got to get out of here. I could do anything I want, what do I want to do? And then the idea, I want to go to the gym.

That's when I knew I had become a different Andrew Pudewa than nine months ago. And so, I really have discovered so many amazing things about resistance training, and getting stronger, and then fasting, and then eating a I would say 95% very, very clean diet. I just would not eat potato chips or french fries. There'd be nothing that would ever motivate me. I couldn't be so hungry that I would eat those things, unless it was a complete disaster and I was deprived of food for days and days and days and felt like I was dying. But yeah, there's just certain things I simply will not put in my mouth anymore, whether I'm hungry or not, because I know how detrimental those things can be to my goals.

And then I will say, somewhere in that whole zone, I had, it almost felt like a little bit of a supernatural experience. I was outside in the sun, playing with grandchildren. And I had this, it felt almost like this ray of light coming into my brain, implanting this absolutely clear and powerful desire to see these kids all grown up and to play with their kids, to be able to swim and teach them chess and wrestle with great-grandchildren.

And then I did a little bit of calculating and I realized, well, hopefully they'll all get married young, but I'm going to have to live and be healthy quite a bit of time. And so that kind of moved me more into the interest of longevity and the relationship because they're all connected

Andrew Pudewa: And so that's kind of where I'm at.

And like any new convert, I got a little bit I guess over enthusiastic and I'm walking down the hallways, looking at people. reading the ingredients on their food. Why are you eating that? And somebody brings in Krispy Kreme doughnuts or something and I'm, "Who's poisoning my people?"

So I've tried to pull back on my being quite so obnoxiously evangelical about lifestyle improvements, but I know that I have had the ability to inspire a few people.

I even did a talk two years ago called Power Tips for Making Teaching and Learning Easier at Home. And I did this at a homeschool conference and of course nobody knew what it was, they just read the title so I don't know what they're thinking it is. But it wasn't a thing about curriculum or pedagogy or scheduling or anything. It was more about light and sleep and food and nutrition and sufficient exercise

Julie Walker: I'm gonna stop you.

Andrew Pudewa: reducing endocrine disruptors, etc.

Julie Walker: Light, meaning get out in the sunshine and sleep. Sleep is...I'm a huge fan of sleep. I've always been.

Andrew Pudewa: I wish I had been. I wasn't until I read *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker

Julie Walker: right. And the reason I mentioned this, cause when you put light and sleep together, it almost sounds like don't sleep, sleep lightly. It's like, no, no.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, it has to do with how early morning light helps to set a circadian rhythm so that approximately, this is fascinating, approximately 12 hours later, It will start the release of melatonin. And so we had Katie Wells on our podcast once, the Wellness Mama. And I asked her, what's the most important thing you would say to help teaching and learning at home? And she said light, early morning light. I expected her to say prioritize protein in for breakfast or something, but light. And so being very sufficient. And then what people talk about minimizing blue light at night with screens, because blue light is a frequency you only get in the middle of the day when the sun is at its zenith, right?

So, in morning and evening, you get more red light because the sunlight is traveling through more atmosphere to get to you, so it's filtered. But in the midday, you're getting the most of the blue light frequency. So when you go watch a movie until 10 o'clock at night and you're staring at a nice big screen or your phone, you're getting this blue light that is unfiltered, and it's essentially telling every cell in your body it's the middle of the day which makes it harder, of course, and suppresses melatonin. There's tons of research on this stuff. It's not like I'm making any of this up. But it's fascinating to me because the more I learn about the intricacies of the human body, and the hormone systems, and the organ systems, and how they all work together, and how nutrition feeds that, and how exercise strength, it's so miraculous. In fact, I, quite honestly, I find it hard to believe that the scientists who work in this area of, of biochemistry and physiology and how they can still be agnostic or atheist and have this whole idea that it all evolved because it's too incredibly magnificently complex and we don't even know everything. We don't, maybe don't even know a fraction of it. We're learning new things every day. There is an intelligence behind this that is so far greater than any intelligence we could comprehend. So, how is it you're not attributing this magnificent miracle of life to a creator? But people get there in their own time.

Julie Walker: So I love that story. I love being a part of watching this journey for you. Some of it, yes, is true, dear listener, he would look at the labels on our products that we were eating. The best thing to do is to just hide it from him. Oh, Andrew's coming in, get the donuts out of the kitchen. But no, I think you have obviously influenced a lot.

Andrew Pudewa: It's because I love everybody, right? I don't want anyone to eat toxic stuff that's gonna lower their immune system or clog their arteries or make their brain function poorly.

Julie Walker: Yeah, I think, I think when you were on this journey, when you were, back to the homeschool conventions, and it was such a dramatic change, you had dropped 60 pounds.

Andrew Pudewa: I lost 60 pounds in about a year and a half and then I gained back about 10, 12 pounds, but mostly muscle from doing resistance training. So I'm actually stronger, healthier, and sharper mentally than I was probably 15 years ago. I'm thinking around 50, which a lot of things happened when I was 50 that make me remember myself and my condition at that time.

Julie Walker: At that time that you went back to speaking you had thought, you know what, I don't know that I need to travel as much as I used to. And you started talking about the possibility of not traveling as much. That hasn't happened, but I will say that some people we heard, and I know you know this, suspected that there was some type of disease that you were fighting, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: People lose 50 pounds and they could have a degenerative disease, but no, it was the opposite, which is one thing I was telling people. But I am really tired. And I'll tell you the things I dislike about traveling in order of disliking them. Number one, restaurants. Number two, TSA. And number three, hotels. But I don't mind hotels so much because I can sleep very well in hotels. What I really love about traveling is just meeting people and sharing stories and hearing their stories and being able to give them advice that I can give with absolute confidence is going to make their lives better. I think, well, I've been

doing this long enough. Everybody's heard everything I have to say, but guess what? There's new people every year. So,

Julie Walker: It's like what you say about jokes. There's no new jokes.

Andrew Pudewa: They're just new people.

Julie Walker: Well, in the few minutes that we have left, I would like for you to speak to that homeschool mom who would like to come up with a way for her family to do health and fitness together.

So I think that this is probably one of the areas in homeschooling in general that people quite frankly, we're not very good at, and that is being mindful of the need for physical activity. We focus so much on reading, writing, arithmetic. How do we get our kids out in the sunshine every day?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, kids are very, very driven toward physical activity. In fact, that's their natural inclination, is to be moving as much as possible. I've noticed this traveling with grandchildren and hanging out with them, kind of in a way I never really noticed with my own kids, because you're always busy with other stuff with your own kids. But, they basically have two speeds, which is fast and off.

And so they will naturally want to just wear themselves out. And I always am joking saying, traveling with grandchildren or spending time, it's the old person's natural exercise program. Just keeping up with them is a good one.

But I do think we, and I think a lot of homeschool moms are actually very good at giving their kids more frequent breaks, and kicking them outside, and having things like mini trampolines and big balls and moving around. And I think what becomes hard is when that borders into chaos, and then there's screaming, and there's noise, and then there's, so there's a balance in there.

I do know some families that go to structured things together that I think are very valuable. For example, martial arts. I think it's the best thing that young children can do a couple times a week. Go to whatever you want. Tae kwon do, karate of some sort, Aikido or Jiu Jitsu if you have it available, but it's really the very best physical training, I think, because it's an individual activity. So it's not a team sport where win or lose is hugely important, which can be distorting. And instead, you're trying to improve your skill so you can go up in rank. Parents can do that right along with kids. And that's very good. It also teaches how to control your body, how to have confidence that maybe you would know what to do if you had kind of a crisis situation occur and do it for many years.

Obviously, getting out into nature, I've done that talk, *Nature Deficit Disorder*, many, many times and nobody ever tires of being reminded of what they already know, which is, we need, every single one of us needs to be outside in nature to some degree, even if it's just a backyard or a corner park in the neighborhood. You've got to get in the trees, you've got to get laying on the grass, you've got to stare up at the clouds, you've got to ground your, and,

getting back into kind of the more maybe esoteric health stuff, because there is a lot of very woo stuff out there.

But there's a huge amount of research on this grounding effect. So just being barefoot on grass or dirt has a tremendously beneficial effect on the electrical condition of the body. And what do we mostly do is we walk around in rubber soled shoes on rubber floors, and even the wood floors are rubber underneath, so we're disconnected from the earth.

And so that's one thing. Get your kids outside barefoot. And it has a tremendous stabilizing effect. I remember and we were fortunate to live in a place where this was possible. Not everybody does. But, I remember, one of the kids, I'm thinking of my son at a particular age, would just get so tiring. I'd use the word obnoxious, but that might be critical. But, you know how kids are just at you, at you, at you, or at each other, at each other, and you just, you don't know what to do. You tell them to stop it, but they don't. Kick them outside. I remember just, "get out of the house, don't come back for a half an hour. You're not allowed back in this house for half an hour. Goodbye." And then they go out in a horrible, "I've been horribly wronged." And they come back an hour later, or longer, totally normal, at peace, cheerful, whatever was the little thing that was the burr in their saddle was gone, and it has the tranquil creating effect of just being outside.

And I think my son spent a lot of time in trees because he found it, it helped him so well to deal with the stresses of school because he was so dyslexic. Anything that resembled school was just very, very hard and tiring for him. And so he would escape and sit in a tree for half an hour and listen to audiobooks while he was in his tree.

And, and so that would be one point of advice. And one of the great advantages of homeschooling is you don't have to schedule your recess like they do in school at a specific time of day. Or I read just recently in one of these teacher website things about how recess is being marginalized and even eliminated in favor of getting more academics to try to bring up test scores and how all the research shows this is not likely to work.

And then you could talk about other things like music as being so helpful, like music outside, that would be the best, the best thing is get your little recorders and go outside and sit or stand or lie on the grass and look at the sky and play tunes. So it's a tough world, and I again, highly recommend Richard Louv's book, *Nature Deficit Disorder*.

Julie Walker: Well, and I think about our friend, the 1000 Hours Outside

Andrew Pudewa: Oh yeah, Ginny Yurich, 1000 Hours Outside. And her new book is excellent *Till the Streetlights Come On*. And full of ideas. So we should link to all those, of course.

And it all goes together. The breathing better air outside rather than inside. The eating better food. Just get all of the sugar and toxic oils and highly processed food, just get them out of the house. And it's an easy shift to make. And you know what? Kids actually can shift over and enjoy whole foods very quickly. It's a natural condition for them. And that makes a huge, huge difference.

And the other advantage I think with home schooling, especially when you get into the teenage years, when those boys in particular, they are eating all the time and growing their body. And guess when you build new tissue? While you're sleeping. That's when you build your muscles and bones and organs and brain and make the connections. And so maybe giving those teenage boys the opportunity to sleep in later than they would you. If they had to get up early to be on a bus to get to school or something, it's going to help them physiologically. And again, I would highly recommend the book *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker. Really helped me understand teenagers a lot better in that regard.

Yeah, it's a toxic world, but we can strive to have the best, healthiest environment, lifestyle that we can. And it's worth it. Totally worth it.

Julie Walker: Thank you, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: Thank you, Julie. Thanks for picking a topic I like talking about so much.

Julie Walker: Yep. Absolutely.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.