

Episode Title: RECLAIMING WELLNESS

Guest: Jovanka Ciales

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Jackie MacDougall: I picked up your book, *Reclaiming Wellness, Ancient Wisdom for Your Healthy, Happy, and Beautiful Life*. Showing it on the video. I learned so much not just about wellness, but so much more, which we're going to get into, but let's start with the basics. I always like to start with the basics. How do you define wellness?

Jovanka Ciales: Mm, good question, mostly because for every person you'll ask, you'll get a different answer.

Jackie MacDougall: Right.

Jovanka Ciales: To me, wellness is a state of being, is a way of living and being. And thus, it becomes a daily action to help you restore balance or maintain balance. The idea, the understanding is that regardless of where you are, you have the ability to get back to a state of balance or homeostasis, where you feel well, even if you're not fully healed or fully healthy, you still feel well more hours of the day than not. So, what do you need to do every single day to help you get to that point? That, to me, is wellness.

Jackie MacDougall: On this final episode, in our Mental Health Awareness series, we focus on the mind-body connection, and how what we feed our bodies often can create a short and long-term impact on our mind and soul. If you are ready for small, simple

steps we can take, and I do mean simple, to feel better through our 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, you definitely want to keep listening.

I'm Jackie MacDougall, and this is The Grown-Ass Woman's Guide.

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Jackie MacDougall: Jovanka Caires is the author of *Reclaiming Wellness, Ancient Wisdom for Your Healthy, Happy, and Beautiful Life*. She's a certified wellness expert, integrative herbalist, nutrition educator and coach who offers lectures and workshops in Spanish and English. Jovanka is on a mission to inspire people, especially Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color (BIPOC), to reclaim the wellness practices of their ancestry in hopes that they too can reclaim their natural and rightful state of wellness.

[music]

Jackie MacDougall: When you think of wellness, is it physical, mental, spiritual? Is it all of it wrapped up together?

Jovanka Caires: It definitely is. You know, we're not just a body. We are also these beautiful souls and these beautiful minds that are incredibly powerful, and one without the other will not really be a balanced life. And so, then again, talking about the actions that you do every day, perhaps your body is perfectly well, but your mental home is not.

So, what do I need to do to help me restore balance at a mental emotional level? And, some days it might be spiritual, some days it might be physical,

Jackie MacDougall: Right. So, sort of like see what's off-balance and then spend a little extra time in that area.

Jovanka Ciales: Correct. It's very much a holistic approach of body, mind, and soul.

Jackie MacDougall: I love it. So, what kind of mistakes do you think we are making when it comes to how we look at wellness and how we treat wellness?

Jovanka Ciales: I think the biggest problem with modern society, in general, is that we believe that what is in front of us is the most important. And, we become obsessive with this idea that in order for us to feel, to be, to achieve, we need to be perfect from the point of view of whatever we see in the mirror; and nothing could be further from the truth.

Number one, because perfection is an unattainable goal, we will never get there. So, instead of choosing perfection, let's just try to go for excellence, perhaps. Let's try to redefine this idea. And, in the book, I talk about the idea of decolonizing the mind. And, one of the very first things of this idea is we no longer need to abide by the rules of this society that tells us that unless we fit in these buckets, we're perfect.

Jackie MacDougall: Yes.

Jovanka Ciales: We're going to find our own way to define our own "perfection or excellence".

Jackie MacDougall: That is so true. We look at the physical, how we present ourselves physically as some sort of indication of whether we are well.

Jovanka Ciales: Yeah. Or we are everything else, right? We're worthy of love. We're worthy of success. We are any, and all the things. And, we've been indoctrinated to the point that women, you know, try to rush into a particular ideal; men feel the need to be either opinionated about those ideals or somehow make us feel like we're not, you know, well, or we're not worthy of.

And, I keep going back to that word "worthy of", because it starts from us. It starts from us understanding that we are worthy. If tomorrow you have no ability to see and look at what you judge in the mirror every day, you're still very much worthy, aren't you? So, what can we do every single day to recognize that there's many other parts of us and we are so unique and amazing and beautiful that we deserve, we are worthy of--- [fill in the blank], whatever your goal in life might be,

Jackie MacDougall: Right. That is something I'd never thought about it that way. If you lost your ability to see, would you still be worthy or would you be more worthy because you're not harshly judging yourself?

According to Jovanka, many of the most popular approaches to mind, body, and spirit wellness are rooted in age-old practices from around the world and come from communities of color, but more often than not, they are primarily marketed to and used by the cultural elite.

There's a whole industry out there of products and services. Some of the different modalities that you mentioned; herbalism, meditation, visualization, yoga, havenos, et cetera; they've been around for hundreds of years. They're multicultural, powerful modalities that basically white people have taken over as if we've introduced them to the world.

Jovanka Ciales: [laughs] Yes, we're going there. This is amazing. Yes. You know, if these-- Whether you will think of it as unfortunate or not, the reality is that most of us have been exposed to some of these beautiful wellness practices through the lens of the dominant society, right?

And, if you go to these wellness practices, whether it is a conference or a yoga class, or, you know, you look at the products that are available for sale, they seem to only cater to this one demographic, right? Mostly female, mostly white, mostly wealthy.

Jackie MacDougall: Right.

Jovanka Ciales: And, the thesis behind the book is that these practices belong to all of us because they have been part of us and our ancestry for thousands of years.

Jackie MacDougall: Yes.

Jovanka Ciales: If you look deep and back, I talk about the use of plants as medicine and many other things. Plants is one example. You realize that every culture in the world has used these plants to help us attain either healing or levels of spirituality and emotional health. So, it's time; it's time for us to recognize that they're ours, they're part of our lineage. And, it is not only our birthright, but we deserve to reclaim them in order to help us reclaim that state of wellness.

Jackie MacDougall: When do you think that began to occur? Where the lack of diversity and inclusion in these modalities, like you said, that were created thousands of years ago, all around the world by black and brown people. And, there's so many powerful things and we now see them as, some of them "woo-woo". You know, some of them, I will say if I think about the last five years, every yoga class I've ever been to was probably taught by a white woman. Meditation is everywhere. [laughs]

Jovanka Ciales: Yeah, everywhere.

Jackie MacDougall: People are popping up as meditation coaches all over the place. Where did we start to-- In your opinion, where did that start to happen?

Jovanka Ciales: Yeah. I think it was a combination, you know, nature has this amazing way to bring things back; you know, what comes around, goes around kind of thing.

Jackie MacDougall: Mm-Hmm.

Jovanka Ciales: And, I think, you know, when the original, the first Europeans came to the new world and decided, 'mm, all of this stuff doesn't belong. We are not going to go with that. We're going to burn books and we're going to, you know, put you in this bucket and turn you into a Christian and help you, you know, go back to "civilization".' And then, those same people became us, right, became us in this Western world and started to realize that we're moving away from our nature.

And so, a lot of-- A few curious people went back to all kinds of different corners of the world and started to rediscover these practices and then said, "I'm just going to bring them back home." I think the original intent was good. It was like, 'I think this is actually a positive practice. And, I want my people to also embraced them.'

Jackie MacDougall: Right.

Jovanka Ciales: And, with it, it became very much what modern society does, 'well, let's see if we can make money doing this.' We started to see shift these ideas of these practices that were part of us and were spread from person to person for free to an ideal that it's like, 'this is actually really powerful and it has the ability to help us be better. I'm going to try to monetize it.' And so, 50 years later, we now believe that essential oils come from Utah.

[laughter]

Jovanka Ciales: And, the things that these kids from, you know, Silicon Valley walk around on their necks, it's actually, somehow it was developed in the 90s or something. It's silly.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. I love that you're speaking up and calling this out because without awareness, we can't get to where we need to be. How do black and brown people reclaim their modalities, their wellness, and how-- It's a two-part question. And then, how do white people like myself continue practicing, if they're helpful modalities, but at the same time, really respect and appreciate and celebrate the people who created these modalities?

Jovanka Ciales: That's a beautiful question. And because it allows both people, whoever is listening to us, to recognize we all have a part in this entire process of reclaiming. And, if you are in that dominant kind of group of people, where you control the space, the space is now yours, you control the practices, you have ownership of them.

It's important that we open the spaces and allow us, the people in the wellness industry, whatever color of your skin or socioeconomic background to tell other people that are not in those spaces, "This space is yours and I want to welcome you. I want to make you feel welcome."

And, it starts by listening, right? What do I need to do to help you embrace these practices that are yours to begin with? Whether it is offering classes at low or no cost; it might be, you know, offering discounts, educating others, bringing resources to open those spaces where the communities live.

If you are a member of those communities that have not in the modern world, in the modern era, truly embrace these practices; then one of the first things that you could do is do things like pick up a book or go to podcasts like yours and others, and start listening to the conversation. Because even though there is an inclusion and issue in the wellness world, a diversity and inclusion issue, it's getting better.

It's definitely better than it was when I first started in the wellness world. And, it's slowly changing and you'll see a lot of people of color going out in the world and letting, not only our communities, but everybody else know these practices are here let me educate you, let me help you fall back in love with them and tell you how to use them to your advantage.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. I walk that line of understanding-- You know, I think about cultural appropriation, right, Versus cultural appreciation. And, as a white woman, I appreciate so many different cultures. And, I want to appreciate them, and I want to understand-- I mean, there's a reason that people practice these modalities. They're powerful, and they're helpful. [laughs] And so, it's important, I believe for us to include the people and also maybe go to the classes that are led by people who have this in their cultural history.

Jovanka Ciales: It's also incredible when I was writing the book I started-- I thought I knew, right? I am a black and Latina woman. I come from a family that embraced a lot of these practices. So, I thought I was in the know, and I've been practicing this for 15 years. And, once I started to open up books and research, you start to realize how much more there is to know.

And, the stories from these elders from every corner of the world was so amazingly beautiful and poignant and exciting. And, I had all the beautiful emotions, the wealth of knowledge that you get from accessing these practices from another's point of view is truly incredible.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. And, staying curious, staying curious about the history, and not just taking [laughs] what we've decided.

Jovanka Caires: Right.

Jackie MacDougall: So, let's go back a little bit to when you started to practice some of these things and get into wellness, were you always interested in wellness growing up, or how did that happen for you?

Jovanka Caires: I was always interested in biology and science and the human body. And, I grew up in Puerto Rico in a relatively uncomplicated, simple, happy childhood, where we didn't go to doctors. We went to doctors once every three years to get vaccinated or whatever it was. But I had a grandmother that used the wisdom of the earth. She had a fourth-grade education, but she was an avid reader.

And, every time somebody had an ache or a pain, she would just go back to the yard and would come back 10 minutes later with some sort of concoction. You never question it. You never, you just simply took it, and you trusted her and you felt better, more importantly. And so, that's what I grew up with. We didn't really call it plant medicine or herbalism. It didn't have a fancy name.

It was what my grandmother did. Moving to the United States as a young adult, I moved away from that lifestyle; like many others thought, 'I'm too smart for this. I don't need any of this. I'm just going to go out into the big city and do my thing.' And, my body rebelled and started to fall apart, relatively young.

So, it was a blessing in disguise, because I had conditions that were not life threatening, but they smacked me down enough to help me understand something is amiss, and I've moved away from what needs my nature and I need to go back to it. I need to reclaim that. I know my body knows what it is to be well and I can take it back.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. And, you're like, 'oh my poor grandmother who I ignored her, and she had all the answers.'

[laughter]

Jovanka Ciales: She had all the answers. I miss her to this day, but she was wise beyond her education level and her years.

Jackie MacDougall: Yeah. And so, where did you start when it came to wellness? Did you just take it all on at one time, or did you kind of bits and pieces?

Jovanka Ciales: Yep. As a Type A type of person, I had several health conditions, so they were all over the place. I had IBS, Irritable Bowel Syndrome. I had a couple of ulcers that had healed on their own and reopened; endometriosis and fibroids. So, I had a lot of pain, a lot of discomfort inflammation. And so, I did everything you can imagine. I changed my diet. I went from one extreme to the other changing my plan, my diet to a whole food, Whole Foods plant-based diet.

I embraced meditation, hypnosis, Ayurvedic Medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and slowly but steadily, my body started to heal and started to react. And so, I realized that this information wasn't available, at least not to me. And, I was like, 'it's unacceptable to me that this is not readily available to all of us.' And so, I took it up on myself to educate others. And, that's when I started teaching and writing and going out in the world and standing in a soapbox and telling people, "This is amazing and you need to embrace it."

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Did you feel different almost immediately because I think that's what a lot of us will try something "try it". And, if it's like, you don't get immediate results and like, 'I feel amazing like a new person;' then we just go, 'it doesn't work'. So how did you resist the urge to just drop it all?

Jovanka Ciales: It is definitely the way of being, right? Like, I need to take a pill and feel better immediately. This is one of the reasons why I love herbalism herbal medicine so much is because these plants are very safe, but they make you feel a certain way

relatively quickly. So, I started taking these plants and within a cycle, it wasn't overnight, but it was within a matter of 21 to 28 days, I started to notice, 'oh, I'm not complaining about pain as much. What am I doing? What is actually working? What is not working?'

This is one of the reasons why I love Plant Medicine and herbalism is because it helps people get out from that discomfort into a place where they can then accept new and different ways of living and things that will take a little longer to implement.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. And so, what kind of herbs or plants were you reaching for first to find relief?

Jovanka Ciales: Ah, let me tell you, to this day I still use, there's about five that I still use to this day. I will tell anybody if you want to start there, most of us have issues with our stomach or with our digestion. And, depending on what your symptoms are, there's an Ayurvedic blend. These are spices. They're pheno seeds, coriander, and cumin in the exact same ratio.

So, if you're taking one teaspoon of one, you do one teaspoon of all the others; and you put it together in a pot of water, maybe 6 to 24 ounces of hot water, and then sip on that. It might taste a little bit soupy, maybe a little bit like a broth, and that's okay. But it's actually very palatable.

And then, the other two that I absolutely love are ginger. Ginger is, every single day in my life, there is ginger in tea form or in any other form. And oh, and the other one that-- Actually, I guess, there's four. The other one that I blend is also fennel seeds with ginger.

Jackie MacDougall: Okay.

Jovanka Ciales: So, I do the first three that I mentioned, and then ginger alone, ginger with other plants, or ginger with fennels; phenomenal to help you with indigestion, gas, bloating, and other issues.

Jackie MacDougall: Oh, nice. And, I'm going to type all this up in the show notes as well so that way people can see the different recipes you're talking about. So, when it comes to accessibility, are you saying like you could just go out anywhere and source

these herbs, or are there specific things you need to look for, places you need to go to get them?

Jovanka Ciales: Yeah, the idea behind not only this particular section in the book, but everything in the book, is it needs to be accessible. If you are-- To me, when I was writing the book, I was always thinking about this single mother of two with a job and a half, and she had no time or a lot of resources to actually spend an extra few hundred dollars in these kinds of things.

So, the herbs, for example, that I just mentioned are things that you can buy in the supermarket. You can probably spend less than \$10 on all of them combined. And, they will last you several weeks, if not several months. So, the entry barrier is relatively low. It's easy for you to consume them. Tea-form might be the easiest way to consume them.

But other practices like meditation, for example, and visualization techniques, you can, if you have access to the internet, you can go to YouTube and type in 'Visualization Examples', and you'll find a million videos teaching you how to do that. Yoga classes, there's a ton of them that are free and available to all; all you need is a computer or a phone device and an internet connection.

And so, you need to find a way to implement them and incorporate them into your life based on your particular needs, because the last thing I want is to add more overwhelm to people's lives that, and then people will like drop them, and that's not the goal.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. You mentioned visualization, when I picture or imagine, you know, somebody visualizing, it's often the athlete, right, this person who's at the top of their game. What do you personally use visualization for in your life?

Jovanka Ciales: Ooh, I use visualization for everything from simple goals, and this is something that I teach people when they're not used to the practice and they need to kind of get comfortable with it. We're constantly daydreaming. We're always thinking about something. So, visualization is a type of daydream. It's a little bit more specific and it has a little bit more structure to it, but it is, just in essence, a type of daydreaming.

So, if you are looking for parking, I will just, before you get to the location, you start visualizing that parking spot that is right there. The present is tangible. You can almost see it in your mind. That's a form of visualization, and it's a perfect example of a muscle, of an emotional muscle that you are exercising to get comfortable with that idea.

And, you can start with something very simple, like finding a perfect parking spot; and eventually, you'll move up from there and start visualizing that perfect job or that perfect partner or that perfect, you know, whatever it is, that perfect body, and that perfect healing state that you're trying to attain.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. I love that. And, our brains are kind of lazy. They don't really know the difference between what we're visualizing and what's real, right?

Jovanka Ciales: That's true. And, it's also a clear indication that we can create our own reality, right? Like you are visualizing, you're making a thought in your mind and you're following through with a process, right? We're not just sitting in our sofas, you know, today, dreaming of this beautiful mansion that we want to have one day without actually going out there and hustling. [laughs] So, it's important that we understand that we're not just daydreaming. We're actually doing active practices that will get us to our goals.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Because I think when you visualize something and you've seen it in your head, then you can go and sort of put forth the action--

Jovanka Ciales: Correct.

Jackie MacDougall: -that you already saw.

Jovanka Ciales: Yeah. I also tell people all the time, because I'm actually getting people excited about the idea of using their hands to like plant, maybe plant little herbs, cooking herbs; or if you have a yard, you can just plant something that you can eat eventually.

And, I'm like, you know, you visualize the fruit tree at the end of, you know, that you can pick the tree, but you have to understand that you have to plant the seeds first. You have to, you know-- You have to water the thing every single day. You have to look at it. You have to go Google it and find out how is it that this thing is going to grow and turn into a beautiful tree that you want to enjoy eventually.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. It's like having one tool, visualization is the one tool in your toolbox, but you need some other tools as well.

Jovanka Ciales: Absolutely. Absolutely

Jackie MacDougall: Like action. Awesome. And so, if someone's listening now and says, "I'm really interested in more of this wellness, this natural wellness ways that we can--" I feel like it's more reconnection to our bodies. There's so many messages out there of like, 'move this many steps per day, and do CrossFit, and run these races and da, da.' And, that's great if you're into that, but I was reading that you look at movement and wellness and all of it as a way to love yourself and not to put another thing on your list.

Jovanka Ciales: Yeah, absolutely. It's the thing that you do every single day. Our goal is to live to be 80 or 90 in good health, right? So, what am I doing every single day that's going to get me there? I don't want to get to 50 and then say, "Oh, I should have done something 10 years ago to prevent what's happening today." But it doesn't need to be as cumbersome as it is when you think about, I have the 10 years of like regular movement and good diet and all that, it sounds overwhelming.

If instead you say, "All I have is 24 hours. This is all I have. What am I going to do today that's going to honor this amazing thing that we call a body?" Yeah. Every so often you're going to have a bad day and have your point of ice cream. And, maybe another day is your birthday, but you don't have a bad day every day. And, you don't celebrate your birthday every single day.

So, today, if I'm going to have French Fries, what else can I have that's going to help balance those French Fries so that I know that I'm honoring my body the best way I know how? Does that mean-- Am I including more vegetables in my diet? Am I moving a little bit more? Am I doing practices that will help me feel content and happy and joyful from the inside?

Jackie MacDougall: Right. It's not punishing yourself for having fries. It's balancing yourself.

Jovanka Ciales: No, we've been indoctrinated to believe that healthy diet is somehow bad. You know, like it's--

Jackie MacDougall: A punishment.

Jovanka Ciales: It's a punishment, and it's not. Like, it's this-- You know, I also use this analogy all the time. I tell people if you buy a Maserati or a Tesla or one of those big fancy cars, you're so excited about the car, right? You're going to take it to a mechanic. You're going to ask them what is the best oil, and the best whatever it is that we put in cars to make that car the best.

And, you're going to spend your money making sure that that car stays healthy and strong for you for many years, because it's an investment. It's an emotional investment, and it's also a physical investment. Your body works exactly the same way. This is a Maserati. This is a five-star hotel, and I'm going to give it the best oil I can potentially afford because I want this body to carry me through into my 50s, 60s, 70s, and beyond.

Jackie MacDougall: Yes. I love that you can go to the grocery store and get the herbs that you mentioned earlier for less than \$10 for all of those. But you talk about plant-based eating, and I've been to farmers' markets, [laughs] and I drop a pretty penny at the farmers' market. Number one, what are the benefits of plant-based eating?

Jovanka Ciales: Okay. So, we know there's a lot of data out there, scientific data and anecdotal data that goes back thousands of years, in some cases, showing us that a Whole Foods plant-based diet is the best diet to help us reduce inflammation and prevent diseases of what we know, the modern era, modern men's diseases, heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and others.

This particular diet is the diet that physiologically works better for us. We have the ability to find most of the nutrients that we need from a Whole Foods plant-based diet. And, we have the ability to prevent the diseases that are killing the vast majority of us today. So, to me, it's a no-brainer. I understand that it's very hard to change people's mindsets about diet. It's almost like changing religion or political affiliation.

But the truth of the matter is that, in my practice as a wellness coach, I see it every single day, people come to me after a catastrophic diagnosis telling me, "I need to go back to eating more plants or heavy plant-based diet. How do I do this?" So, what I'm

trying to tell people is if you cannot give up your cheese, for example, don't give that up just yet. Learn what works for you, educate yourself.

And as you do that, incorporate more plants into your diet. So, don't give up the cheese or maybe give up the chicken. Don't give up the red meat, but maybe give up all the other kinds of flesh until you educate yourself, and you slowly get to a point where you're ready to take it to the next level.

Jackie MacDougall: Okay. And then, when you do want to even incorporate more plants, as you said, and I love that, where it's like adding instead of subtracting, at least at first, where do you-- All vegetables, are they created equal? Or are we looking in specific places? Because there are places around the world where you can't find fresh vegetables.

Jovanka Ciales: I know. I know. And, even in the richest countries in the world, we'll see things that we know today as food deserts, right? You see it in lower economic cities or regions of the world. What I tell people all the time is, start with what you know and love. There's a chance that you have one fruit or one vegetable that you absolutely love, how can I remake that particular vegetable?

You go to the supermarket and you find the one that you absolutely love. If you don't love any, or if the ones that you love are really expensive, then let's find some other alternative. What might be some that might be in season, that might be locally produced? So, they tend to be a lot cheaper that way.

And, I'm going to take that home, and I'm going to go online and find out recipes that will help me, you know, make this experience enjoyable and palatable and exciting for me to try more. And, slowly but steadily, it takes us about 21 to 28 days to build a new habit. Your taste buds take roughly that long to change, but they will change.

And eventually, you'll start realizing, 'oh, this is a new way of eating. This is a new flavor I've never tried before and I'm enjoying it. What else can I do? What other vegetables or fruits might be in season, might be grown locally that I can enjoy for less within my budget and my budgetary needs?' And then, slowly move up from there.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. And, in some places, we could grow them ourselves, right? [laughs] In our--

Jovanka Ciales: If you're lucky enough, but even if you live in a big city and you are, you don't have a yard, you can grow a lot of vegetables in your window cell, or any area of the house where you have natural light coming in. It might not be a big fruit tree, but it could be, you know, summer squash or many others out there that you can enjoy and grow from home.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. I love that. I think it's really easy to expect that people can just go out to their local food store and grocery store and find organic, fresh vegetables. I like having these conversations because I want to be more knowledgeable and aware of what the struggles can be out there, you know, and not just be like, everyone can go to Whole Foods, you know? [laughs]

Jovanka Ciales: Right. In terms of the matter is that there's many options, and it could get really overwhelming when you start thinking about eating healthier or being healthier. You know, there's people telling you, "Well, you can only eat organic, or you should only do this, or you should only do that."

And, the truth is that a lot of us, the vast majority of us are so far away from where we need to be, that any first step is a good step. Right? And so, if we start just simply by understanding our bodies, are these amazing machines that are very resilient. Yeah. It would be easier to eat organic versus non-organic, but your body in this amazing wisdom has the ability to flush out chemicals when they're actually too many of them in the body.

And so, we can do things like say, 'well, I'm not going to worry too much about organic because it's not in my budget, but I'm still going to focus on eating the rainbow, for example. Making sure that every day I have at least these seven colors in the rainbow, in the fruits and vegetables that I consume every day.' That alone will take you farther than almost anything else out there.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. Absolutely. And, there are other, you know, consequences of eating locally and eating plant-based when it comes to, you know, carbon emissions and all of those other things that I'm not educated on. So, I'm not going to go too far down that road, but do you find the benefit of being part-time plant-based?

Jovanka Ciales: Oh, absolutely. I mean, 90% of my clients are not plant-based, and a lot of them are not interested or they're like, you know, 'I want you to--' They want to

reign me in all the time. They're telling me like, 'you know, I'm going to still celebrate the 4th of July or Thanksgiving or whatever it is.'

I would rather have somebody tell me, 'every single day, I'm consuming a lot of Whole Foods, a lot of plants, a lot of color in my diet; a lot of live foods, so a lot of raw or lightly cooked vegetables;' than I am going to be too concerned about somebody proselytizing over whether or not you should be fully plant-based, that's not the goal.

Jackie MacDougall: Right. That's great. And so, a lot of the women who listen to the show, you know, they're over 40, many of us have, you know, perimenopause, menopause, body changes. Are there steps that you have seen in your experience? Like, what would be the Top Three or however many things that we should be doing as women over 40 to feel more well? Like, if someone came to you and said, "I have five minutes to talk to you, what are three things I can do to feel better?" What would you say?

Jovanka Ciales: Perimenopausal or menopausal women are my bread and butter.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: Yes.

Jovanka Ciales: So, I hear that all the time. The first thing that I will tell you is that you need to reclaim your space and your time. What does that mean? It means once a week, ideally on weekends, since it's where most of us have time to free, you want to walk around your house and find the space that you want to reclaim. It could be the bathroom, it could be the yard, it could be a den in the house.

Then you're going to reclaim the time. When is this particular space empty for a minimum of 20 minutes? It may be that you have to wake up half an hour earlier. It might mean that you have to come home a little sooner, whatever it is, so that you can reclaim that space and that time. That's step number one. Step number two is, find the practice that will help you bring back your energy.

Remember, we as women are caregivers, even if we're not mothers, we give, give, give, give, and we are depleted. So, what do I need to do to help me reclaim that energy back

and replenish? It might be meditating. It might be listening to a podcast. It might be having a good old cry. [laughs] It might be reading a book, where that space and that time you're going to find the practice that best works for you.

And, the reason why I'm not giving you specific is because it will be very different from one person to another. And then, the third thing will definitely apply to all and is to make some ginger root tea. [laughs] It works for almost everyone, regardless of your constitution or in your particular circumstances is grounding, is warming, but it's all could be actually very cooling if you are the one that feels a little bit overheated.

It helps you balance your body in a way that just almost no herb out there I have found that helps you. It's almost like a mother's hug. It's like a grandmother's hug. It's a beautiful gift that you can give yourself. It helps you speed up your metabolism. So, if you're trying to lose weight, it's actually great for you. It's an analgesic. I mean, I can have an entire episode just on the benefits of ginger.

[laughter]

Jackie MacDougall: That'll be next time. So, how do we make it?

Jovanka Ciales: Yeah. Just make your tea the night before, so you're not spending 20 minutes making the tea and that now your time is gone. I tend to have my little root tea. I buy this big root of ginger, and I flash in with my knife. I just cut them in little slices. Maybe the equivalent of three or four tablespoon, I'm going to add about three or four cups of water and boil it for about 10 to 15, a little less than 10 minutes, actually, until the water gets yellow. You can then put that in the refrigerator, and that will last you two or three days.

Jackie MacDougall: That's it? It's just the ginger and the water?

Jovanka Ciales: Just the ginger and the water.

Jackie MacDougall: Okay.

Jovanka Ciales: If you need to, you know, you can also like use different sweeteners and stuff if that's what you need, but it's actually really, really yummy on its own. And, my suggestion is when it's time for you to reclaim that space and that practice, you are going to warm the tea, the one cup that you need and bring it into your space and then just do your thing.

Jackie MacDougall: Nice. Nice. I mean, seriously, you could just provide that tip; the 1, 2, 3, and we would be done. [laughs] That was great.

Jovanka Ciales: You'll remember me. You'll be like, 'oh my God, this is so simple, but so powerful.'

Jackie MacDougall: Jovanka's book, *Reclaiming Wellness* is available wherever books are sold, or you can visit grownasswoman.guide/episode165 for all the links and recipes to her recommended teas, along with a full blog post. Before we go, you know I like to ask for some parting words, and Jovanka did not disappoint

Jovanka Ciales: Whether it is this book or any other that you're going to pick up or, or listen, whatever it is that you're doing to help you know that when you're doing that; you're honoring your ancestors, you're honoring your lineage regardless of where that comes from, and you're honoring the people that you're passing this amazing knowledge to.

So, it comes full circle. It's a gorgeous gift to yourself as an honoring to the people that came before you, and as an honoring to those people that you love, that are in front of you, that you're trying to take care of every day.

[music]

Jackie MacDougall: Thank you so much for listening. As always, it's my goal to reach millions of women and help them get the support and resources they need to live their

most badass grown-ass lives. If you can help me do that by sharing the podcast, YouTube channel, or blog with a friend.

And, if you feel inspired, please share a rating and review on your favorite podcast app, comment on the YouTube channel or leave us a review on our Facebook page. Any of those things would work and be very much appreciated. I'm Jackie MacDougall. Until next time, remember you are a grown-ass woman, act accordingly.