

INTERVIEW WITH NUTRITION ENTREPRENEUR MELISSA HALAS-LIANG

by Tyffanie Ammeter

Melissa Halas-Liang, MA, RD, CDE is the nutrition entrepreneur behind SuperKids Nutrition Inc. & Melissa's Healthy Living. She is also a preceptor for dietetic interns and has over 10 years of clinical experience. After working with Melissa this summer on a mini-internship, I thought it would be interesting to hear more about her career, as hers is one example of the variety of opportunities available to RDs!

-Tyffanie

TA: Did you always want to be a nutrition entrepreneur or were you interested in other fields of nutrition?

MLH: After my dietetic internship, I worked in nutrition support in critical care and provided continuing education on electrolyte management for 10 years. I loved teaching physicians, pharmacists, and dietitians about insulin and electrolyte management in nutrition support. Later, I specialized in diabetes and earned my CDE. I also created NICU and outpatient oncology positions, implemented hospital wide blood pressure and blood glucose screening, and created a weight management healthy lifestyle program.

After having a child, I discovered a pertinent, unaddressed need among the maternal and pediatric community, had a creative idea on how to approach it, and felt like I was on a mission to solve it! I wanted to inspire moms and teachers to feed their kids correctly right from the start of life. My knowledge from teaching functional foods led me to create the Super Crew, which are now part of a CDC.gov funded grant.

TA: Any advice for students just entering their Dietetic Internship?

MLH: My take away from my dietetic internship is, go for the gold! I volunteered for extra projects during my internship that were not required. I took the initiative to problem solve and when I saw a need, I filled it. My other advice is to write for websites and invest the time into developing your voice and expertise!

TA: What aspects of being an entrepreneur do you enjoy most? Which aspects are most challenging?

MLH: I love motivating people and I enjoy being creative and naturally embrace change—so being an entrepreneur works with my personality. I get to help create healthier kids, families, and communities, which is very rewarding. I work with

amazingly generous and kind people. I get to be creative and no two days are alike, which is why I love my job. I also get to use skills that I've acquired through different jobs along the way, like applying for grants, technical writing, and balancing budgets.

Starting a business is full of challenges. One of the most difficult tasks is to get everything done on your long to-do-list according to your timeline and business plan. There are always unexpected costs, new projects required to get from point A to point B, tedious spread sheets, organization projects, and the list goes on.

TA: Do you have any advice for RDs-to-be that may want to start their own businesses once they have the RD credential?

MLH: Follow your passion and pursue it with integrity and enthusiasm. Volunteer strategically for experience or help others with similar pursuits while you're starting out. Commit yourself because you love it and you'll be surprised by how much you learn and grow. Always remember to never give up after disappointment, because the right doors will inevitably open.