



- Steph: Hi Kale and welcome back to the show.
- Kale: Thanks for having me on again Steph, and here's my public apology for missing a couple of recordings.
- Steph: Don't worry, we'll catch up and nobody will know.
- Kale: Now they do.
- Steph: Yeah now they do, you dobbed yourself in. But I always love when we chat because I can always hear so much nature and birds in the background. It's so beautiful where you live. I just love it.
- Kale: Yeah, it's funny, I actually had to go, because I did a little sound test before, and I actually had to go and shut the door because the kookaburras and the cockees and the rest of the bird kingdom are all sort of making a home right here on my balcony. That's always nice for the emotions, but it's not great for the sound quality all the time.
- Steph: Yeah. Look, we just go with the flow. I listened to our last episode, and do you remember when you were at my house and I was having that coughing fit? I just listened to the episode again when it went live a few weeks ago, and gosh, I was just chuckling away to myself as I replayed that moment.
- Kale: Ah, it's always funny when that happens. There's just moments where ... it's funny, you're probably the same, when you work alone at home, you realize how far through a conversation that's being recorded that, "Oh, my voice isn't ready to speak today." And then you just say, "Oh, okay, this gonna take a little while."
- Steph: Oh my gosh. It's all authentic here on the show, so we're gonna roll with it. I'm very excited to have you back, and really to talk about an exciting new project you're working

on. So, some of our listeners might have seen little sneak-peaks online, but I'd love for you to dive in and tell us what you've been working on?

Kale: Yes, I've been working on a lot in between revising the gut movie and doing a little bit of the final edit on that before we go international and organizing my next film, and all that sort of stuff. I've also been sitting at home chipping away at a little project, a passion project, called Mandy Microbes Big Gut Adventure, which is a kids gut health book, because I was always getting requests from mums. A lot of mums. Some dads, but mostly mums at my screenings and stuff saying, "Hey, can you write a kids book and can you do this and do that for kids." And I always thought my content was probably not appropriate for kids. It's too deep, it's scientific, it's, you know, maybe a little bit pushes the boundaries sometimes, and I thought how can I actually hit this problem, this market of kids with ... essentially, when you look at the statistics, Australian children are not that healthy anymore. And that was always concerning to me, and I didn't know how to approach it. And that's when I looked at my philosophies and my childhood and what had the biggest impact on me and that was stories. I used to read Harry Potter. I think I read the Harry Potter series about 10 times. I read the Red Wolf series probably five or six times. I read Wilbur Smith the same. Lord of the Rings and then films and, you know, it was always a story that had a huge impact on me and I thought if I could use that as a medium on which to deliver some important lessons and principles, timeless principles about the gut microbiome, that would be an appropriate way to get the message across to kids and their parents as well.

I've shown the story to a couple of adults and it's, according to them, I'm not just saying this, according to them, it's a bit of a page turner. It's a story and we basically follow along a little microbe called Mandy, and she's this cute little yellow microbe that we've drawn up. And she undergoes the gastro-intestinal system. The part of it that she is living in undergoes a bit of a change when her host is exposed to, or chooses to consume some different foods. And then, things are sort of turned upside down and she has to go and find the rest of her tribe, which happen to be probiotic bacteria and she takes a bit of a journey down the digestive system. Then we get to the ending, and I don't wanna ruin it.

Steph: Yeah, don't give it all away.

Kale: Yeah.

Steph: As I think you've probably already learned along the way, I think such an important topic, and why I definitely did not read when I was 6 through to 10, which is obviously the main age group that you're looking at from an independent reading point of view, but amazing that parents can read to any age child and really set the scene. You know the foundations are definitely there, but I love the way that you go through the impact of food, because I'm sure that a lot of us don't think about that, let alone children when they're at places like a birthday party. When obviously we can all imagine or visualize what's usually on option from a food point of view at birthday parties, yeah?

Kale: Yeah. And if you think about trying to get through to kids when it comes to health ... I've got a sister who's gone through this. She's only 13 now. So I've seen her go through this

over the past seven or eight years whilst I've been in the industry. And she had so much information at hand, however, she didn't find it relevant to her. She either couldn't comprehend it or just thought, "Oh, this is boring."

But with Mandy and the story, what it does is it gives kids someone to look after. It gives them a clear tangible consequence of their dietary choices. It empowers them to say, "Well hey, I can choose this food, or I can choose that food. But I actually have someone to look after within myself." These gastro-intestinal bacteria, or Mandy, so it actually gives them more of a tangible response and character, and I suppose more of a perceived relationship between their dietary choices and what's going on in their body. So that was the goal with it and I think we've managed to achieve that with the establishment of the characters and the traditional story arc and following that journey. I'm hoping that we're able to develop a strong, caring relationship between kiddies and their gut bacteria.

Steph: Yeah, beautiful. I think you're right, giving Mandy a real character and bringing her to life allows our children to think about things a little bit differently without it being too scientific, as you used the example with your younger sister. But also I think getting them to think about the choices that they make, because we all know kids are going to eat sugar at birthday parties. The majority, anyway. But, I guess just giving them a little bit of a different angle to think about things from, and, you know, hopefully it'll control how much they consume.

Kale: It's funny. I mean, kids are gonna be kids. That's always gonna be the case and I'm assuming, there's not going to be a day where we completely phase out junk food altogether. And I suppose that's not what we're trying to do as well. It's just giving them more of an idea on what their dietary choices do and impact when it comes to their health and well-being. Because, when my sister was growing up, we were getting into health quite a bit, and she would go to school with certain foods, and she would come home with different foods that came from other people's lunch boxes, you know? So, there is always going to be holes in this parenting system when it comes to kids and their diets.

So again, if we can empower them ... kids aren't stupid. Kids are actually really smart, and if we can empower them to make good choices when it comes to health and well-being and diet and they're more interested in growing their own veggies for instance. And then eating those vegetables because they know they've got a population of bugs to look after, and those bugs thrive off lots of fresh vegetables and fruit and a clean diet. And I think we're gonna move in the right direction.

And again, it's gonna take time and things obviously need to change when you look at the health statistics here in Australia. We've got something like 20% of kids either experiencing or expected to experience mental health challenges, 25%, so one in four, are actually overweight or obese and 5% have allergies. And then I suppose you learn that doesn't even really go into behavioural issues in school which are either undiagnosed or not recognized. It's a bit of a sad situation.

Over the next couple of weeks, maybe a month, we are gonna produce a little mini documentary on this just to lead into Mandy, but I don't know why this is happening beyond ... I mean we saw processed foods come into the equation quite a long time ago. So I don't know why the statistics are so high now. And that's kind of what I think we need to look at. But regardless, we need to at least give kids a very strong foundation on which to work from, because when the diet's right, the mental health is gonna be much better. The application in school is gonna be much better, the sporting performance is gonna be much better, and all those different factors might just end up with a much better result in some other areas of health.

So that's kind of where we're going. It's almost like dropping a pebble in the ocean, but you hope that the waves created from that are emphatic and important enough to actually insight a wide-spread change when it comes to these sort of statistics. And it's not just kids that we're affecting here, it's parents too. I'm sure you've dealt with parents. I've spoken with many parents who are just burning the candle at both ends because they've got a sick child. And I just think if we can prevent this from happening, or even reverse it, that would be just the ideal situation, because the kids are our future. We need to look after them. And that's the whole reason why I've done the book.

Steph: Yeah, I can see why you're so passionate about this topic. I think, again, it's giving them a little bit more education. And, yes it might be a little bit cartoon-like and giving these characters names, but I think it's so important at that young age to be able to think about how food choices make you feel. I speak to adults everyday who don't think about how food makes them feel, or they've never connected the dots with consuming X and feeling Y. One really simple example I ask all of my corporate seminars is ... I ask the audience to raise their hand if they experience three thirty-its. And I explained what that is, it's obviously the sugar cravings or the need for more coffee or a nap under your desk at that 3:30 pm or 4:00 pm. And every single person in the room puts their hands up, but they're all shocked to realize it's due to their previous food choices, like the refined carbohydrates that they've been relying on from the earlier part of the day.

We just aren't taught to connect those dots. Not to mention mental health, I mean, that conversation's only in it's infancy in relation to the whole food space. I think if children are taught to think about how they can feel in a mood-sense or how it can help them feel happier or whatever the language might be used to the individual. It is so powerful. Think about what different and more improved place they will be in when they're older versus all the majority of the adults in the west today, like, that's huge.

Kale: It's totally massive and, Emma, my girlfriend is a teacher and a nutritionist and dietician, so she's sort of across these two worlds. And I've been consulting with her on this and asking her what she thinks the best thing to do is. I think her troubles are that it doesn't ... I'm trying to say it nicely ... But it's difficult for it to be implemented into the curriculum on a generic enough scale so that it applies to everybody. Because we know nutrition is so individual and unique, but there are very important frameworks with which we need to fit in. When the canteen is selling food in complete disparity to what is actually recommended in the new-aged health programs in school, you sort of find that, "Oh we teach this stuff, but we won't implement this stuff." So that means, all of a sudden, it's not important.

So if we can move past that with more of an understanding, like you said, of, for instance, going to school with balanced blood sugar, instead of having those extremely high carbohydrate breakfast and throwing out the blood sugar first thing in the morning and then essentially going on that roller coaster for the rest of the day. If we could just curb that, imagine the impact. And not just from a productivity perspective and from a teacher's mental health perspective, but also from the children as well. And if those habits stick early, you'll find definitely that they'll persist. Hopefully throughout high school and then hopefully through a good solid working life.

Those little changes that we make when we're young, and you would know this and I know this, I've got habits that have stuck around since I was five or six years old. When we implement those in an effective way now at a young age, I think the benefits are actually seven-fold. They can be seven-fold, they can be ten-fold, they can exponentially grow down the line as we age. So that's why I think it's really important to actually empower kids to be able to do this.

I've been working on the parents for the last eight years, and the statistics are still ... obviously I'm not having as big an impact as I want. So I wanna actually go to the kids now and empower the kids, because I see it when you trust kids and when you empower them to actually make decisions, a lot of the time they make the right decision. Sometimes, they make the wrong decision, but then they learn very quickly. And if we can encourage them to make those connections between what they're eating, how they're feeling, which is realistically the most important driver for kids at that age is 'how do I feel'. If we can connect those two dots, then we're gonna see some vast improvements in dietary choices.

And we've seen a big push for garden movements and growing your own food in schools and stuff which is absolutely fantastic. And if we can take it a step further, and start to incorporate the microbiome for instance, and our gut bacteria in Mandy and Lacto and The Candies and all these different characters. And if we can turn that into comprehensive lessons on what the gut is doing nice and early on, then I think we're going to move into a stage where nutrition and P.E. and gut health are all sort of become fundamental parts of the school curriculum. They're going to have to be, because so many people our age and older do not understand the gut microbiome. And if we can understand the fundamentals, then I think we're gonna be operating from a much more informed position as opposed to shooting in the dark and just sort of blindly fumbling our way through dietary choices and health choices for the rest of our life.

Steph: Yeah, I agree, and I think also it'll end up working in reverse. We saw that quite a lot when that sugar film hit schools. It was a conversation now we're really driving in schools and then the children were having that discussion with their parents. Which I think is amazing, because, yeah, they're the ones that can-

Kale: So good.

Steph: Reverse engineer it essentially. I don't think it'll be dissimilar with Mandy because it's so approachable for them, and, you know, for a lot of adults gut health is definitely outside of what they're ready for. You would know this first-hand. You don't always start with

gut health and talking about bone broth and things like this. You wanna set the foundations, and people are busy and they often don't have time to keep adding on. I think if children can raise that conversation, and we'll obviously get Mandy into schools and that's gonna be so powerful. I love that.

Kale: Obviously the goal ... it's just a book at this stage, but as I was chatting with you before we started recording, the goal as with everything that I do is to turn it into some sort of film, and some sort of visual storytelling video. Hopefully we can achieve a bit of a wide-spread success with the book, and then take all the proceeds from the book and put it straight into a film or a series and hopefully get some government funding.

It's funny, when you write a book for kids, it's almost more intimidating than writing a book for adults, because you're dealing with something that can be quite a sensitive area. But I love that Damon and the guys behind that Sugar film have really set the groundwork for a space that's more open to these new ideas. For instance, the fact that sugar will disrupt your microbiome is almost universally accepted now, processed sugar. If we can use that and anchor that to expand on the position and expand on the topic and then produce more resources and refine and add value then that's gonna really, like we've been saying, hopefully have a really big impact on what's going on.

It's a sort of book and a sort of project that you almost just rely on word-of-mouth because the traditional advertising avenues and all that sort of goes out the window because you've just gotta sit down and write a really good story. And that's kind of been my last couple of months, and you've been on the receiving end of that. I find it quite difficult to be left brain organized, scheduled, blah, blah, blah, blah, when I'm trying to get into that creative space and sit back and be objective about the projects that I'm working on and making sure that you're hitting all the right marks, whether it's looking at the overall story arc of Mandy and working out where who's gonna be the teacher in this thing, in the story I mean. Who's gonna be the main character and what sort of arc is she gonna go on. How's she gonna change throughout the film. What understandings is she gonna learn and how is that gonna translate to an understanding from the reader or the viewer. It's such an intricate project. Overall, you have these overarching goals and checklists that you really wanna tick off throughout the project and it's, again, creating a bit of a tangible relationship between the host, us humans, our children, and their gut bacteria and realizing that they're really doing an important job. And whether that sort of comes down to, tangibly speaking, whether it comes down to Mandy scheduling a meeting with the immune system of her host and emphasizing the gut immune relationship there. Or, whether she's sending communication up to Bill Brain Cell up in sector B, and touching on the gut/brain connection there. And doing so in a way that is entertaining and relatable is all so important. And then taking those more simple aspects of... From a certain perspective, they are simple, but taking those more ... I don't wanna say childish, but, almost child-like connections and making sure that they fit in with the over-arching goals of it, which is to instigate wide-spread change. It's such a fun process and to me it's actually been so enjoyable to get it underway. And every time I get an email from my illustrator, which is my sister-in-law's mom over in South Africa, she's a professional Illustrator, whenever I get an email from her, I always get a little bit excited to see the pictures and see these characters come to life because I've never been so removed from the visual element of a story. I just wrote

it and pretty much gave it to her and said, "Hey, this is what we wanna do. These are the goals. Eventually, we wanna turn it into a web-series or a film," or whatever, and then getting those pictures back, you just see when you bring in the right people and you hit the right marks with the story and you use the right colors, overall it ends up being hopefully a comprehensive, entertaining, and quite engaging story. Once you give it a read, I only sent it to you this morning. Once you give it a read, you'll be able to let us know.

Steph: Yeah, absolutely. I sure will. I think you're doing wonderful things. I wanted to also ask you about ... and you've probably mentioned some of them throughout, but just about some of the favorite lessons that you'd like to teach. Whether it's parents, things like the sugar conversation or is it fiber, or you can go from the angle of children. Some of the lessons that you think are really important from a foundational point of view.

Kale: I think in the health-space right now, there's a big issue with people trying to overanalyze their way back to health. They're trying to hack their way back to health, and you would see this, people are always after hacks. They want the next hack, whether it's fasting or whether it's bullet-proof coffee, or whether it's being Keto or blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. All these things are beneficial in their own way, but you can never hack your way to health. This is what people are missing. You have to inherently be healthy. You have to live a healthy lifestyle and value health in order to be healthy. And it starts with your decisions and your mindset, and then it flows into your actions, and the choices you make when it comes to diet and supplements, and what you avoid, and what you choose to do on a daily basis when it comes to your work, and how feel fulfilled and your family and all these different things.

So bringing that back to the story, I find that if I had gone into it and said, "Oh, well, I'm gonna try and teach kids that lactobacillus bacteria is the most important bacteria," you know that could be undone in the next 10 years. We're still learning about the microbiome. So it's really focusing on those timeless principles of gut health, such as environment, is key. Environment will determine a healthy microbiome far more than the type of probiotics you take. If you're taking the best probiotics in the world and you're eating a shitty diet, you're gonna have a crap microbiome.

Emphasizing those fundamentals, those timeless principles, such as that are always gonna be something most important. Not just for kids but also for adults, because we still don't get it. We're still ... and it's hard, because I'm part of this whole problem. I've been on the podcast and I've talked about the hacks and people want the hacks so you deliver them. But at the end of the day I almost feel like, in every video, in every article, I wanna be like, "Yo, relax. Just relax and make sure you're happy. Make sure you're living a life that's in alignment with your highest values and then worry about your breakfast." You know, because you can be eating the perfect diet, but if you're living a life that's out of alignment with your values, you're always gonna be to an extent unhappy. It's an issue. So, that's sort of where I'm going, I suppose personally and it's being reflected in my work which is always gonna be the case. I'm never gonna just produce content for content's sake. I always want it to be a reflection of where I'm at and the lessons I'm learning constantly. I mean, that's been one. It's that you have to have a long-term ... and this is reflected in the book, you have to have a long-term approach to health. You

have to understand that environment is key. Your long-term diet and lifestyle are the most important factors when it comes to establishing a healthy body and subsequently a healthy mind. What you do everyday, the choices you make everyday sort of give you momentum and empower you to take back control of your life. And we feel like we're in control of the controllable factors of our life. Like how we spend our time, what we spend our money on, the people we hang around with, then we're in a much happier space. We're in a much happier and healthier space. Again, that's reflected in the book with not so explicit wording and much more of a subsequent understanding and subsequent lessons from the story. But I think they should be comprehensive enough so that kids can really pick them up, so that if they do go to the birthday party and everybody's eating some lollies or some soft drink and things like that, they don't feel the pressure to say no, they feel comfortable with saying no. Because, they've got this wonderful body of organisms living inside of them called the microbiome. Or just called Mandy Microbe if that's how simple you wanna go with it. They're gonna maybe picture Mandy and Lacto and they want those guys to be happy so they're comfortable with saying no. And they might even encourage their friends to say no, who knows where it goes.

I just want kids and parents to be happy. Because when people are happy, they tend to live longer, they tend to experience better health and it also works in the opposite relationship. When you're healthy, it's much easier to be happy. So, yeah, that's kind of where I'm going at the moment, is trying to relax my way into health and not be so hackey and be much more intuitive with my decisions around what I do. And of course I've established my dietary habits and things like that, and I don't change them too drastically, and they're pretty much in alignment with yours. So people sort of know what they look like. But, yeah, I think when it comes to gut health, those fundamental principles are the long-term environment is what's most important in establishing a healthy microbiome. You can be 100% perfect for 12 weeks, and that's great, you can do that. But I'd sooner you be 80% perfect for the rest of your life.

Steph: Could not agree more. And I think especially when you're talking to children. Again, you're not gonna get them to not eat sugar at a birthday party, that's just not gonna happen. Yeah, yeah.

Kale: Have a strong microbiome to be able to deal with that, and they can if they focus on the long-term approach.

Steph: Yes, so cool. Very exciting. Is there anything else you wanted to add there about gut health or Mandy, or anything else that you wanted to share with parents or children alike?

Kale: If we can dedicate a big part of our health and well-being practice to getting those fundamentals right, I think it's just gonna make it a lot easier for people. Because at the moment, people are feeling very overwhelmed with the health industry. And I feel that way, I feel a little bit disillusioned with it sometimes, I get a little bit frustrated with people getting hackey and saying this and that. Even though they might be saying something factual and true, I just think that we need to focus on those main principles and relax into it. So that's probably what I would emphasize most is that if you can make

some big choices like maybe it's growing your own fruit and vegetables, and maybe it's committing to having three to four serves of those and even better, five to six serves of those vegetables and fruits per day for you and your kids, then you're gonna find that you have an exponential sort of growth when it comes to the impact on your health and well-being.

So yeah, I would just re-emphasize that those fundamental principles are what I think we should focus on because they just allow us to move into an intuitive place of making decision, because no one knows your body as well as you do. And you've got trillions of little inner-nutritionists inside of you calling out for different foods at different times. And if you get in tune with that and you can listen to them, then you'll make the best choices ever.

Steph: Yeah, amazing. So good. I can't wait to meet Mandy and I will encourage everyone to check out more via the links in the show notes. Obviously, at the moment, you're looking to release Mandy to the world in December. So we're not far away now. So stay-tuned guys and thanks so much Kale. It's always so great to have you on the show.

Kale: Thanks for having me on again.

Steph: No problem. So we'll talk to you again soon.

Kale: See you guys.