Introduction and Speaker Bio

Welcome back to this event, folks. Folks, it's time to bring on one of my favorite people. Karen Christian is a sponsor of this event. He's generous enough to say, hey, Reed.

I love what you're doing and let me help you. So first I'm going to go into his bio a little bit, and then we're going to ask, Karen some questions and, he's one of the most well known research microbiologists on the planet.

He's been involved in the dietary supplement and nutrition market for the past 20 plus years. So we both started about the same time. I would say he comes from a very strict research background, having spent several years with hands on research and development in the fields of molecular medicine, microbiology at the University of Iowa.

So we know he's a smart guy too, right? And he left the university. They hit. Yeah. So, well, you know, you left that university recently took several leadership positions in the global companies in business development and product development.

Most recently, Karen is a co-founder and the chief scientific officer at Microbiome Labs. Now, probably most of you have heard that. We're going to ask you a few questions about that.

And last year, Karen was a, speaker at my conference in the fall. This year, he's a keynote speaker at that because we just love what he's doing, and he's just the absolute leader in microbiome and probiotic research.

He's a frequent lecturer on the human microbiome at the medical and nutrition conferences. I think that's where I actually met from. If he just got off another call, with a European, similar program, is this because he's the most wanted speaker on the topic?

He's an expert guest on national radio. Satellite radio has been a guest speaker at several health summits as a microbiome expert, currently involved in over 18 human clinical trials on probiotics and the human microbiome, and, you know, his just his background is so extensive, in terms of the scientific research and leadership that he's providing in this area, which is a health coach, you know, it's critical if you don't understand the microbiome, you're going to have a hard time actually helping people.

So, Karen, welcome to this, event. And I want to know a little bit more about your background, like, give us some whys and wherefores and and how you got here.

You obviously were a great student. Tell us, tell us what happened. Yeah. Reed, thank you so much for having me. It's an honor to be here. I was very excited to be able to have this conversation with you and talk to an audience of people that are either in the health coaching space or looking to get into it.

So I think it's it's phenomenal that they're that they're doing what they're doing. They have the interest that they have. For me, my interest has always been in the sciences.

As a kid, I was a really nerdy, curious kid. You know, I was that kid that that never won, that never took for granted anything around me in terms of how things work.

I was always digging into to figure out how things function. You know, I grew up in India and Malaysia. I moved to the US right before high school, and in Malaysia.

I was so interested in medicine. My mom's a doctor that, she named one of her clinic's clinic around after me because I would always come in there and look at what she's doing and mess around with the tools.

You know, and one of the things like, for example, I remember when I first moved to the US, you know, I found out what a microwave is, right? That we didn't have any of that in India.

And I was always like, how does this thing work? Like, you open it, you put something in it for 30s and it becomes hot. You know, that that I just I couldn't get over not understanding how that worked.

And I would ask my friends, well, how does this device work? And then, like, I don't know, you just put it in push button and, you know, that's the kind of thing that I wouldn't allow to to go.

I would dig into it and figure out, how does microwave radiation work. And so I, it was always in my nature to be in this field. And then, when I got to college, I knew I was going to be in the biological sciences.

That was my deep area of interest. The way I chose microbiology is actually interestingly pertinent to this, this, this very time because of a pandemic.

There was a movie called outbreak. I remember some of that movie with Morgan Freeman or Dustin Hoffman, right? Yeah, that was a viral outbreak. It was it was becoming a pandemic.

And they were chasing it around and trying to find a cure and all that. That was what excited me. I was like, that's what I want to do. I want to become a virologist or microbiologist.

I want to chase down viruses and infections. And, so that's how I jumped into the field of microbiology.

Early Curiosity and Path to Microbiology

And what's interesting about, the field of microbiology, obviously, you get a deep respect and understanding of microbes and the microbial universe that exists all around us and in us.

But naturally, a lot of people start focusing towards the the harmful or dysfunctional microbes. I, you you start working on pathogens and infections and all that, which is an area that I was really into.

And I did study a lot of, pathogenic bacteriology. But then I very quickly became interested in the idea that, well, there's a just a tiny fraction of microbes that are actually harmful to us.

The vast majority of them are actually beneficial or benign. So what about that? You know, so that was my big push into the whole microbiome probiotic space, which was to feed that part of my curiosity was fantastic.

So are you one of those kids that, like, you liked cutting open the frogs in seventh grade? And it totally is. Oh my God, I've cut open everyone's frogs.

They let me, And you know, the smell isn't that great, but no, I was I was loving it. Funny, you mentioned that. I know I just recalled, what formaldehyde smells like and probably why I didn't go into, biology anymore, but, you know, we both ended up in this this space where, we want to help others.

How did that get nurtured in you? Was that your mom being a doctor and, Or how did that happen? Because I know you're you're you're. Yeah. That beneficent person.

No. Thank you so much. No, it was it came from my mom. And in fact, in, you know, often I talk about, where that idea of helping people came from. And I remember a very vivid scenario that occurred when I was probably seven years old at the time.

Right. And I was at my mom's clinic because in Malaysia, we were actually living above the clinic. It was like a one building where the clinic was downstairs and our apartment is upstairs.

So often I would just come down and watch what she's doing. There was a village nearby, and this guy comes

hobbling into the clinic, and his toe is like, this big right arm.

And it is 4 or 5 times the size of a regular toe, apparently had dropped something on it, and it just swelled up. Ballooned out. You could tell he was just an agonizing pain.

And he walks in and here's this, you know, messed up looking toe blew and and, my mom's like, okay, come on in. You know, she he walks into her clinic and I was like, mom, can I, can I watch can I see what you're going to do?

And she's like, oh, okay. Of course. So I remember sitting there going, how in the hell is she going to fix this messed up toe? And then she proceeds to bring out these tools that look like pretty aggressive tools.

And I'm like, well, what is she going to do with that? And so she proceeds to cut out and pull out the nail, the from the big toe. Right. And I'm like, what the hell is she doing?

She's making it worse. Like she's actually ruining the toe even further. Then I realized that underneath the nail, when you when the toe gets crushed like that, it builds all of this pressure, this blood, all these busted blood vessels.

And the pain comes from all of that pressure. So pulling out the nail, she's alleviating the pressure or the pressure from the nail bed. And sure enough, she squeezed in a bunch of, like, kind of dark color blood came out and the toe shrunk, and the guy's, like, had such a relief on his face.

Then she wrapped it up nicely and sent him off, and he was so happy. He felt so good. And I was like, wow. So two things struck me about that moment, which I still remember vividly.

Number one is that that is totally counterintuitive, right? Going there and destroying the toe more was actually the way to fix it. But she knew that because she had the knowledge of how all of that worked.

Right. So that was one thing I was like, I need to know how all this stuff works. That way I can help people. Number two, just seeing the alleviation on its face was so, something I remember till today, was that that and she got that kind of professional satisfaction from it, you know?

So for me, that became the focus is like there are toes being crushed every day all over the world as a metaphor for all kinds of problems that people go through with health.

If I understand the body, if I understand science, I feel like I'm just smart enough to know that stuff and help people. And, so that was the big impetus of it.

And then, of course, I asked. I was like, what about his now? And she's like, well, the nail would have fallen off anyway. And and it would grow still grow back.

You know, he'll grow a new nail. So I was like, that was amazing. Mind blown at the time. As a seven year old kid, it was that it was that moment. Yeah.

And then and then the reason I ended up in what I do now is I'm also a bit of a megalomaniac, probably similar to you with big thinkers. Right. And so my thinking was I was actually kind of on track to go to medical school, become a doctor, and do it one on one the way my mom did it.

But because I kind of think in a much bigger picture, I'm like, okay, how can I help millions of people or hundreds of thousands of people, through my efforts, rather than one at a time in a clinic, you know?

So that's why I ended up. Fortunately, the position. It's funny, you know. Yeah, I think, you know, not too small. Global domination is all I want. You know?

So. Exactly. Yeah, yeah. Hey, other planets, they can deal with their own nonsense. Like we just care about this

Earth. We don't need universal domination.

This global. That's it. Yeah, exactly. It is. Funny you mention it because I was going to ask you, how does the, how does that personal surfing, like, you know, your mom was a physician.

She obviously helped people. And, you know, you you might have gone that way. How does that desire to help people translate to your to this, these companies that you've developed and the fact that you're on the scientific board of at least a half a dozen other companies and things like.

Right. How does you think that translates? Yeah. So, it's funny, within our company, within Microbiome Labs, almost every day or every other day, we share testimonials that come in from doctors or patients that are impacted.

What we do and the whole premise around that is, you know, here's why we do what we do, right? And everybody plays a role in that within the organization.

And we get so many of those. And that's what drives us. You know, last year, doing what I do, I flew for 100,000 miles, right. Which is an insane amount to fly.

But I was gone all the time. But every time I start to feel tired and jet lag and, you know, I'm away from family too long, I see those testimonials. I see the the impact and and and it completely just feeds this machine that, hey, we have the capacity to help people, so we should, you know, if you're if you're born with the capacity to help and you don't do it to me, that's a, that's a big, you know, that's a, that's a big letdown.

So, you know, if you're fortunate that enough to have capabilities, whatever the capabilities are, that ends up being able to help people, certainly at a large scale, then you should be doing it.

Well, you you definitely have a wonderful blend of, Magnum Infinity along with that, megalomania that you. Yeah, yeah.

Helping People Through Science

So, you know, with with what you're what you're I'm hearing, I think, is, what we all need to do as health coaches is sometimes, you know, it's okay to pat yourself on the back a little bit, you know?

And I gotta tell you, we are doing some amazing work that wasn't being done before. Prevention really kind of grew. And, you know, I was I was around a long time ago.

It is the stories. It is the fact that someone who previously had tears in their eyes, you know, now has tears of joy. You know, they're they're just saying thank you.

And it's not. So I interview every single one of my graduates personally. Still, to this day, I've done 3000 interviews and the the two things, main reasons.

And so I want to get their honest feedback. So I talked to them about how they became a health coach, what made them check, you know, select our program.

But what I really want to get to is how can I make it better? What would you like to have seen in our course make it better. That's why it's grown so much.

Karen, it's not that I'm so smart. It's. It's a great, teacher in these things. And so I just asked what would make it better. And then enough people ask you, and you go, okay, I'm I'm going to put that in there, you know, so in 12, 13 years of teaching, it's just grown because it's what the the graduates have asked for.

But the other thing, that I just can't get over is the personal gratitude they feel for, what's, you know, what we've done, you know, and it's just that's what really keeps you going.

Yes. I want to make a yes. I want to pick their brain habits. And I don't do it for ego as much as just, that it there's something that you want to you want to hear.

Thank you from people. And you get a lot of. Thank you. Oh, it's what. All right. It's. Yeah. What is that about? You nature. You know, that brings us all together.

Yeah. You know, it's it's a it's a stoking of oxytocin. We've got hormones within ourselves that rewarded us for altruistic or beneficial behavior. Right.

So one of the one of the advances of human, the Homo sapiens human, is that we've developed this ability to live in community structures. And we've learned as a species that cooperation within the community actually strengthens us.

Right. And that's how we can kind of overcome our inherent weaknesses. Right? We're not like lions. We're not like bears. We don't have the physical strength and the capabilities that they do out in the wild.

But we have brains and we have ability to partner with each other to protect ourselves. And we've got all of these inherent nature, inherently built, systems that reward cooperation.

And that reward is so powerful, you know, and I think that's what drives you. That's what drives me when I feel like I'm contributing to my community.

Which, you know, hopefully the community is large. It's a big global community. When I feel I'm contributing, I feel good, I feel satisfied, and that's what fuels me.

Because, you know what? It's really easy to become complacent and lazy, and it's so much easier just to sit back, you know, you know, you can do this thing, but it's so much of work.

Like, I mean, look at what you're doing now with this, with the summit, right? This is a lot of work, and it's so much easier for you just to chill out and just hang out.

Yeah, right. But you're putting the work in because. Because you're going to get that reward. And you're, you're going to help people and you're going to get that reward.

So I'm not shameful at all about the idea that, hey, I like a pat on the back. You know, I like people, describing how the work I've done has impacted them in a positive way.

And I think there's no shame in that. You know, I think we we try to create this false narrative where we should all be kind of like a mother race of some sort, where we're just doing service and help for the sake of service and help without any reward back for it.

But it's just not human nature, you know? So I think it's totally fine. Pat yourself on the back, reward yourself, celebrate little victories. Every time you make a breakthrough with a client, celebrate that you know that that you deserve that celebration and that fuels you to go get go get that other client and figure it out.

Yeah, I think that's a prerequisite. Definitely. And, why we are a community and, you mentioned it. So I'll just follow up and say, why did I put this?

You know, I have a health coaching program and, why did I invite 25 other health program, founders or teachers like that to, to get together because that's what's the right thing to do.

It's not competition. I call it. And I borrowed this from someone. I don't know where I got competition. So thank you to whoever gave me that phrase competition.

And, what does it do? But, you know, when the tide comes in it, right? Everyone's boat gets, you know, up a little

bit. Right? Great. Yeah. The rising tide lifts all ships. Right.

So you're absolutely right. And I, I'm the same way too. We've worked and collaborated with other probiotic companies, microbiome companies, with the idea that raising a rising tide lifts all ships.

And and we talk about this a lot when I have my management meetings and I'm talking to them about leadership and management, or when we're talking to potential partners, people ask me about competitors.

And to me, I'm like, we have no competitors. You know, not because we're super cool, not because I'm trying to say we're awesome. The only competitor that I see is myself, right?

We are our biggest competition. Can I be better than my previous self? Can I be better than my yesterday self? That's the only way we view competition.

All of the companies in the space are doing something, and in some cases, cooperation is going to be even better for both companies than it is, than it is to look at each other.

It's kind of like, vilified, you know, enemies, fighting for the same scraps. Right? And at the end of the day, I think you said this to me in our, in our previous conversation is there's plenty of business for everybody, you know, sickness and is not going anywhere anytime soon.

And the population is only growing. So there's endless numbers of people we can all help. And in many ways that cooperation is going to help everybody, rather than just a few.

Yeah. It's so true. Just, something funny, you know, I have a course registration team, and they're there to answer questions and, you know, see if our course is right for people and then, you know, facilitate registering their course registrars, you know, and, and, but they're not salespeople.

They're just there to help answer questions. We don't want people. That is not right for you. You know, one of the biggest, tricks to success is to onboard the right people, you know, that are going to be happy in your program.

But I had I was taking a call myself one day, and this guy's call, he's like, well, I'm not sure, you know, like investing in your course. I want to learn.

And I know you've got, you know, great reputation and things like that. But will I really be able to help people and will I be able to, you know, find enough clients?

I just and I left just like that. It's good to like I said, well, tell me where you live. He goes, I live in new Jersey. And I said, oh, no, forget it.

There's not enough sick people in new Jersey.

Health Coaching, Community, and Collaboration

You can just pass on the, you know, like, of course there's enough business for everybody. You know, no one's going to resonate with my style to me every time.

And, and, you know, the main thing is, if you have a desire to help others. Yeah, you need to get training. That's something that really separates the professional from the hobbyist.

I don't use the word amateur because it seems degrading, but look, if you want to be a health coach as a hobbyist, that's fine. You can work on number one, work on yourself.

I think that's another prerequisite to it is another prerequisite to being a health coach. You got to be curious. You got to want to learn. You got to want to help others.

But you kind of need to walk the talk like, you know, we have everyone do this on themselves, I'm sure. Like, I'm running your latest news lab right now.

They're shipping me a kit because you have tests coming on. I want to try everything and see if there's anything about myself I can improve. But, let's talk about that.

You know, if you don't mind. Yeah. What drove what drove the development? What keeps driving this this creation of new things for us to use new tools for the health coach?

Yeah. You know, it's, for us as a company, we let the science dictate the movement of the company. That was my initial premise, you know, like, you can find things that are hot, things that are the popular thing.

You know, CBD, all of a sudden it's hot. And so it's a bunch of companies want to get into CBD because it's the next hot thing or. Yeah, energy products and this and that.

You know, we we ignore all of that kind of stuff. We really follow the science and we look for gaps in health care management. You know, we we look for missing links.

We look for things that are not being served well by other companies. One of the things I've always said to people and including people within our company, is that if someone else is doing it well, we'll never get into it.

I don't care how hot and amazing it is, right? It may be the next hottest thing, and if we did it, we could make $50 million over the next couple of years.

I'm still not going to get into it because if they're doing it well, let them do it. We'll push people towards them and say, hey, if you want this kind of product, there was all this, this issue, this company does it well, you know, so we're going to get into spaces where we don't feel things are being addressed adequately and we can bring value and provide tools.

So when it comes to our product line, like the Ingestible products, probiotics, prebiotics and so on, we've just kind of been following a scientific narrative from when things start going wrong with the gut, and then how that extrapolates into other parts of the body.

And so we started by trying to fix the fundamental issue of leaky gut, which to us is the biggest problem in in a dysfunctional digestive track. And then once you can start bringing that under control, then how do you fix other aspects of it?

The immune response, the digestibility, the movement of food, the reflux issues, you know, the inflammation in the bowel, all of those things. Slowly we kind of go through it and we create products that address each of those issues.

As long as nobody already has a product that does a good job with it, right? So that naturally brought us to this idea of understanding your microbiome.

You know, one of the most common questions I get through all of the talks, I do I do around 40 or 50 talks at conferences a year. You know, of course, this year it's been like two, so.

Oh, yeah. Like, you know. Yeah. February. And hopefully the my next one will be at the FDA conference. So, looking forward to that. So, you know, the it all of the talks that I do to the professional environment and then all of the podcast and all that, that I do that go directly to consumers.

One of the things I keep getting questions on is understanding is trying to people trying to understand what's wrong with their microbiome. Right? They know their gut is messed up.

They know they've taken multiple courses, antibiotics in their life. They know they've had a poor diet. For the most

part. They know that they lived in an apartment that has really moldy for a long period of time, you know, and we all have gone out and had our share of partying and fun.

And so we've all destroyed our ecosystem in some way. So we started saying, okay, let's take a look at what's offered out there in the marketplace in terms of tests to try to understand your microbiome and see if there's value there.

Because if there is, not only would we promote that companies work, we would also use that company's work in our research because we do lots of clinical trials. Right.

So we started investigating all the different tests. So we actually, in fact, I've, we've published four clinical trials just in the last 4 or 5 months of this year, including a trial just published, done at Cleveland Clinic on C diff using our Mega Spore probiotic, our flagship probiotic.

So we're heavy into the research. We spend lots and lots of money on research and, and we often you look at tools to be able to utilize in research. So, four years ago when we started one of our first studies, we looked at all of the microbiome testing tools and kits that were out there, and we tested them all, and we found most of them to be pretty inaccurate.

So we were like, all right, they're not repeatable. We're not getting the same answer when we do 2 or 3 tests on the same sample. You know, we're looking at their sequencing technology and we're like, they're wholly inadequate in many ways.

Sequencing technology has made leaps and bounds, over the last several years. And they're not using the top of the line, technology. And so just understanding that, okay, nobody's really doing it to the level that we think is, is needed, and nobody's presenting you with data that is actually useful in kind of managing how you go about your lifestyle routine, your diet, your supplementation and all that so that it fits well with with the functional issues going around in your microbiome.

And so we saw that gap, and we had so much, requests from our professional environment where you guys are called Microbiome Labs. You should have a microbiome test.

We're like, well, I guess you're kind of right. You know, if anyone's going to do a microbiome test, it should be the company called microbiome Labs. And so we said, okay, we're going to go on this adventure.

We started about a year and a half ago, and we spent a lot of time digging through the research and understanding microbial communities. You know, what are the functional communities within the gut that have real impact on your symptoms, on how your body responds to food and the environment around you?

And then we went through a lot of the research on how to map those communities. Right. So how can I tell you what the tendencies and personnel these are of your microbiome?

You know, and it's not absolute. It's not absolute like a lot of the other tests that you would do as a FDA in. But it'll give you a tremendous amount of information on why that patient responds.

The way they they respond, you know, and what are the things that are driving continuous dysfunction in them? And so we've got something like 27 different functionalities within the microbiome test.

We give you all the mapping. We tell you what your microbiome looks like comparison in compared to large groups of healthy normals. And then we dig into the functionalities and tell you the kind of functions your microbiome tends to perform, or tends not to perform well.

Yeah, it's amazing how much research one can do on a subject that, people claim they already know a lot about. So that's because there's, yeah, you know, wisdom and then there's well, here's what's really going on.

Totally. And let me just ask you to to put it in perspective for people in the microbiome science world, in the last five years, we've had over 50,000 published studies in just in microbiome science.

I mean, it is absolutely insane. It is the biggest scientific revolution ever, right? Nothing else has had that level of scientific focus and work going on.

You know, and over the next five more years, that's going to be another 60 to 70,000 publications. It's an amazing, mind boggling amount of information.

And, and, and the beauty of that is that we will be continuously learning and getting more and more of a clear understanding of how this body of ours functions, you know, and so we want to be at the forefront and and you are there and you will be there.

When, when, I heard it put once. I might not have the numbers exactly right, but something like, you know, people say, well, I'm up on I stay abreast of the scientific literature.

If you read ten hours a day for a year, at the end of a year, you'd be 50 years behind. And your reading, you know, it's like there's just something like that, you know?

So let's talk. You know, about something I think is pretty important for the health coach. And I've spent 20 years pretty much defining and expanding the backyard of a health coach.

You know, we do run labs. We, we don't diagnose and treat anything specifically, but we look at data and we look for healing. Opportune communities. That's, a really important term, you know, healing opportunities.

That's not a medical diagnosis. Where the well, here's the, the, the standard of care treatment plan. It's like, what needs fixing in a sense, you know, and we don't fix anything because we know the body heals itself.

Microbiome Labs and New Testing Tools

There's an innate and we want to coach up function and well, we coach down maybe those contributors to what I call metabolic chaos. So when you look at the microbiome, you're looking at a lot of healing opportunities.

And you you want to know, what needs oh, this is we want to coach this up. We want a that's good. You know, we want more of that or that those groups or these comments, whatever they are, you know, oh, with this stuff here, this is what we want to coach down.

You know, again, we're not diagnosing a certain bio. You know, something. And well, here's the treatment standard of care. This is the the accepted, you know, product or agent to use.

We're much more sensitive to. Well, whose test results are these. How do they live? What is it? You know what's there? All the things about them you need to know.

So let's talk about that. Where these were. This backyard is of a health coach who can coach up function, who can look at healing opportunities, and still not be practicing medicine.

Do you have in your, in your, you know, acumen or verve biology record? How do you describe those kind of things? Like where's the Becker, the health coach beginning in, in that regard.

Yeah. And that, that's right. That's part of the, the the beauty of the whole concept of health coaching is that, I love the term that you use healing opportunities.

I think that is, it really a great way of describing all of the little changes and, and, that we can make that actually have a huge impact on our overall outcomes.

Right. And it's not even it's not medicine, it's health. It's about health and it's about functionality. You know, it's it's it can be as simple as certain lifestyle changes.

It can be as simple as certain dietary changes. It can be as complex as these complicated supplementation regimens that can really help, people's metabolic response and so on.

The reason why we are so supportive of the health coach industry and, and we sponsor and we speak and we do all of that is to me, it's a it's such a big missing piece in wellness care. Right.

Because you can go and see a doctor and you can get a diagnosis of a disease. But, you know, one of the big issues is you're not really going to understand all of the factors that contribute to that problem.

And there are lots of factors with every condition. There are lots of factors. And throughout the day, all the decisions you make, there are lots of decisions that you can make that will have an impact on that, on that outcome.

Right. A doctor is not set up to help you through all of those decisions, right? A doctor is not set up to sit there and comprehensively look at your life from the day, from the moment you wake up until the time you go to sleep.

And the decisions that I've made throughout that time, and all of the opportunities where change can be exercised, that can have a huge impact. That's why I love the idea of this kind of more in-depth coaching.

Because like a coach to to a sports team, right? You are you are intricately managing all of the interactions, the decisions I've made on the field, the plays that are run, you know, just that person kicking the ball in that way could completely change that.

The outcome of the game. Right. That person being substitute it at the right time can actually make a big impact on the overall game. So being able to see all of those moving parts and help you orchestrate the best and most effective way to live.

And that to me is like the beauty of it, because you can get involved at that level. As a health coach, you're literally coaching them through the best decisions that they should be making throughout the day.

And you're finding all of those opportunities where those decisions matter, right? So, so to me, it begins and ends, starting with that, that person's, you know, issues and problems that they have.

And, and does it ever end because we are always, always hopefully getting healthier and better and moving in the right direction. Right? So the relationship to to your health coach can be forever.

And in many ways it should be, you know, as important as this idea is to us, one of the things I did as soon as we had the capability of doing it, as soon as we had a certain number of employees within the companies I hired, a health and wellness coach for a company.

And, and she's an internal coach for just for my employees. Oh, right. Because my idea for them is that. Hey, listen, you know, I want you to be the best possible version of yourself that you can be, right?

I'm going to get a lot more productivity out of you. I'm going to get a lot more of the awesome talent that you inherently have. And one of the ways of doing that is for you to elevate yourself.

And, and I want you to work with this person, you know, from a health perspective, from a mental health perspective, from managing your time, all of those kind of things.

So we we actually put that in as like a benefit to our employees. They have access to, to, to a health coach. So, so yeah, it's, I can't emphasize enough what an important role that plays in someone's overall wellness.

And it seems to me, Karen, that you have a great perspective on the, the value and, that it's about, changing the lifestyle and, and, like, and going beyond that into looking at what those healing opportunities are and then giving people things to do that.

Again, it's not practicing medicine, but it's look at the reality here. Now here's the you know, you're basically those are the consequences of how you you've lived.

And the only way to change it is to live differently. Then you'll then you'll enjoy the, the different consequences that really health, you know, like having more energy and clear thinking you want you don't want to people should have to to work with brain fog, you know, and they're tired.

Just really stuff. So it pays to do that. We have a, we have we're all health coaches. Everyone who works for me, about 23 people are graduates of my program, maybe 1 or 2 in accounting, something like that.

But but, you know, we still work with them and support them in their health. I also have an HSA, like I pay, I donate money every month. Everyone gets so much money to spend on their health.

That's just the benefit of working. For FTN. You get X amount and you can spend it on anything you want. In the in a health related thing, you can pay for your yoga classes.

You're whatever it is, you're done. That's what the I think smart employers are doing. And it's why the need for health coaches is only going to go up and demand.

And I want to clarify though, I would I see developing and you see if you, agree with me because things like, there's, there's sort of institutional health coaching now because physicians to me have always been kind of market followers, not seen in derogatory terms.

But but you know, what's what's the latest. They'll follow along. So, you know, then there's those of us who are kind of more independent, the pioneers, the, you know, the driving force.

And we just really want to help people. And we don't want to become a doctor and diagnose and treat disease. We want to find out what's really wrong and help a person fix it, you know, so physicians seem to be recognizing now more and more the value of the health coach.

But my which is great. I'm all for, you know, openly discussing the benefits. But what I'm seeing and I'm concerned about is a trend towards more of a corralling, more of an appropriation of that term, because the only study being done right now by, if you go to clinical studies.gov or something like that, the only study being done in health coaching is are people more compliant on their IBD medicine by having a health coach.

So so there's a chance here that health coaching is going to be commandeered or, or corralled in a way that it just helps perpetuate the same system of disease management, symptom removal and that sort of stuff.

So so I think what I'm trying to do here also in some of these discussions is, is create an awareness that health coaching is a lot more than that. There is the professional health coach who does know how to look at data and, correlated with the person and individual and then create, you know, custom complete lifestyle plans.

So and encompass their mental emotional health, their, obviously their diet and their sleep patterns and, and, you know, exercise and reducing stress in every way that it can be or managing it in every way it can be managed.

It's not just using health coaching to to perpetuate the disease care thing. So I'm hoping that, yeah, as the future develops for people like you who will work with us, you know, like you, you, introduces us to the latest and greatest in technology.

And it's really important the partnership continues. Totally. Yeah. I mean, and our whole focus is how do we provide people that that train in your, your program and other health coaching programs, the tools that they need to to

exercise their capabilities.

Right. Because ultimately, like any job, you need a certain set of tools. And that's our role is to provide you with the tools, both testing now in terms of the microbiome and also, tools that you can utilize to to exercise different healing options and opportunities within, within the client.

And it is it is a danger of it getting institutionalized. A great example of that to me is what happened with registered dietitians, right? Registered dietitians started off as a nutritional, you know, kind of counseling system.

But they got pulled into the conventional medical, system. And now so many registered dietitians work in hospitals and they follow the food pyramid, and they have to follow USDA guidelines.

And, you know, this kind of a weird, antiquated stuff. You know, like, for example, we went to the big, registered dietitian show. I don't know if it happens in Chicago year, but it was in Chicago that year.

But it's called the fencing show or something. And we had a booth there because we're there. We're like, okay, these people are playing a role in the whole health, management area.

We had a booth next to PepsiCo and we're like, how is Pepsi doing here? You know, like they provide products, right? And we're like, oh, this is not the right place for us, you know, because they're providing products to hospital and nursing care centers and all that.

And registered dietitians are making those recommendations to people. And so, then there's a there's a separate group called that that are more focused on functional registered dietitians that are very big on on functional medicine side on, on, holistic health and so on.

So we're seeing a small group kind of break off from that. But they got institutionalized. Right. So yeah, exactly like what you're saying, what you're trying to show people of how they can really play a significant role in getting the individual to look at many other areas of healing opportunities.

Their doctor has got one thing, one laser focus, you know, like, oh, here's your problem, here's a pill for it. Go and be merry, right, versus the health coach and go, okay, let's really understand who you are and what's going on.

And here are all the opportunities that you can exercise to make yourself better then a company like ours goes. Okay, here are some products and tools that you can help to exercise those opportunities.

And what what's great about that term healing opportunities is that looking at the microbiome, you know, the some estimates as 90% of all your metabolic activity is controlled by the microbiome.

So 90% of all the healing opportunities in an individual could be thought to be within the microbiome. And so you really have to understand what world is going on in there to, to be able to exercise, you know, the best outcomes for the patients.

And here's another thing that I realize is more often than not, it's the patient or the client themselves, the individual themselves who is their biggest roadblock.

The Role and Value of Health Coaches

Right. It's it's it's, coach can get in there and help them get out of their own way. Right. And that's a big, really important part. You know, the 30 minutes of the doctor is not going to do that.

Right. And so you need that kind of help and support to be chaperoned or sure, played around the obstacles that you've created yourself. And I and I see that all the time, like people are in their own way of their own healing, you know, because of the blocks and issues that they put up and their lack of understanding of how some of these systems work and so on, a coach can really help them get out of their own way.

Man, I love that term you just used. You said, you know, we can sherpa someone, you know, and it it means you got to know the mountain. If you're going to take other people to the top, you better know your way and at least and have a lot of wisdom and principles and things.

It's why I think the training is so important. And another reason why I brought all these trainers together so that everyone, whether they're my, future students or my graduate, can, can get exposed to different, just different parts of people's lives and how they can be useful in their maybe they're part of a team that wouldn't be bad at all.

There's no one that knows everything. The other thing about that I want to say is that I don't know anyone who's at the top of the mountain. I know I've been in that business for 20 years, 20 plus, and I still have things to work on, you know?

And and I've got my, mentors who've mentored me and, and, they've got stuff to do. You know, we're all, like, on this stairway and, and, you know, I don't know anyone at the top of the stairs.

There's kind of what I want to say. We know a lot of people that we have who hire us. They have a lot of steps to take. You know, they they're kind of, you know, we in our jobs kind of, you know, come on, next step, next step, next step and that kind of thing.

Yeah, I totally and I think a lot of it is just making sure they're going in the right direction. Right. It's, it's, it's an endless ascent as you're, as you're trying to go up and every step actually gives you better outcomes, better quality life, better, you know, enjoyment of, of this wonderful, wonderful thing.

We all get to live through, which is life. But a big part of it is right off the bat, are they going in the right direction? You know, they are they moving up or they're moving backwards?

Yeah, absolutely. So, you know, it's like with food, you know, there's no there's no one food that I'm certain is great for everyone. I don't know the food that everyone in.

But there are foods that are bad for everyone. You know, there's definitely things along those lines. I want to talk a little bit of more about the future here.

You've been a really generous sponsor to us, and in that sense, to all of the health coaching world, you're you're helping, and not just with financial considerations, but with the work you're doing, putting those tools.

Great. Also, I'm like, I want to support you right back. Yeah, man. Give us more tools. Let us get, because we got a lot of nerd in us, too. You know, like most of us, or at least, you know, a certain percentage nerd and a certain percentage sort of altruist, you know, just want to help others.

And, we could talk about those things, you know, when you talk about is what about that other element? So your partner, you put it all to us, you really want to help us.

You got to be a business person too. And this is one of the hardest issues I have with health coaches is realizing their value. Talk to them about that.

It's okay to charge what you're worth. It's great to be an altruist and a nerd and to figure out how to help people. But if you're going to help them a lot, you got to have a profitable business.

You know, that's the only way to do good in the world, right? Totally. Yeah. I mean, it's same with us, right? I mean, if we don't have the right margins, if we don't have the right, you know, profitability, you know, like, we can't afford to do the research.

We can't afford to make the discoveries we make. We can't afford to invest in the future of creating more tools that that will help people. So it has to be a viable business, you know, that that we can't get away from. And because it needs to be a viable business, you have to put yourself out there.

Right? And and you have to charge what you're worth. And the thing is, like, if you think about what you're actually doing for somebody, it's their life.

It's the most valuable thing that they have is their health, their wellness, their life. Right. And so, you know, just putting a price on it in, in, in itself is hard.

But then you think about all the time you spent going through your training and understanding all of the things that can impact somebody the the time you spent understanding all the different types of labs and how to read them and how to understand them.

And then the years of experience that you've had that, that, that all build into it, you know, all of that is worth a lot to an individual. And in our modern society today, we get value completely twisted.

You know, people will see something and price it based on other things that they look at. Right? You know, you they'll price it based on how many cups of coffee a day is that or, you know, payment towards a car or something like, like they put it into a different perspective.

Right. But what we should be really focusing on is what is the price of your health and your wellness and being the best version of yourself, right? That should be the thing.

We're all ready to invest it, right? We will buy a new awesome flat screen TV. We'll buy the latest phone without blinking an eye. Even if it costs $1,000 because it's a tad bit faster and the camera is a little bit cooler.

Right? But somehow we kind of have this mind block on investing in our health. And that's the part that one has to overcome. One of my. And speaking of that, just a tiny little business tip, to people that are listening, because inevitably you're going to train yourself.

You have to go out there and be a business. But to me, the best business advice I ever heard was people don't buy what you do. They buy why you do it right.

So everything we do as a company, we lead with our why we don't lead with our what? You know, like, everyone can explain what they do. But the biggest thing that gets the, that gets the primitive brain, triggered the, into connecting with you and your message.

And what you do is based on your, your, story of why you do what you do. Right. And most health coaches that I've talked to so far actually have gotten into this space because their own health struggles.

Right. Lots of people that in my conversations, for example, if that's your case, if you've had your own health struggles and in that journey, you found a huge lacking in the kind of support you needed to overcome your your health issue and you and through your own learning, you learned that, wow, there's this other profession that you can, you can do in order to help people that way.

Actually your why. Right. Don't lead with here's what I do, here's my system, here's how I, I work with you as a client. Lead with your why? Like, why are you a health coach?

Why did you go through the training? You know, why are you out there to help people? That should be what people see first. Once they buy into that, once they get locked into that, and part of the brain, the emotional centers of the brain get locked into that.

Then you can describe to them exactly what you do. Right. But in all your communications, when you're out there, you're talking about what you do. You're you're putting your website together, you're putting your pages together.

Remember to lead with your why not with your what? That's the really important part of it. Fantastic. And, gosh, we've, we've, been interviewing for quite a while here.

I'm not sure I've asked you everything so that you make sure we understand what you're. What? You're the, co-founder and chief science officer of Microbiome Labs.

You're you serve on other scientific boards, board of directors and all kinds of things. Do you have anything else but your. What? We all want to help people.

And, I love how you blended things. And you could tell us a little bit more about why. I mean, did you personally have a health problem when you were a kid or was there something it was it watching your mom fix that big toe or what?

Well, yeah. You know, good question. So, yeah, in fact, I, you know, fortunately I did not struggle with any major health issues, as a kid or even as an adult.

Which, you know, knock on wood, has been a fortunate part for me. My history. But that the story of the big toe in itself is, is a big part that made an impression on me that I felt if I was any part of my mom, meaning if I got any part of her brains.

And what's interesting is my dad is, was he's passed away now, but he's, he was a microelectronics engineer. My dad had over 200 US patents in his name.

Right? Yeah. Oh, yeah. Virtually any electronic product you use today will have some microchip in there that he's invented. Something in there to to make that that device work.

Right. So so it's that mix between that, that curious, discovery outside of the box thinking that my dad had and then the, the biological systems based thinking that my mom has, I always felt like I was a mix between the two.

And so for me, I wanted to become like, like a biological engineer. I wanted to have the inventor ship the discovery, you know, the the making, the big leaps, in the scientific knowledge that really helps a ton of people.

But do it in the biological sense. The same the way my mom, helped people on a one on one basis. Right. So that was my my whole focus. My big why for why I got into the microbiome side is in just understanding microbes and understanding this microbial universe.

I started to really realize that if we did not understand the microbial microbiome, if we did not have tools to modulate the microbiome that were missing out on a huge number of healing opportunities, that we could all have, and we could change the nature of health care, we could change the nature of disease.

Right? Yeah. That is the idea that I had.

Why, Business, and Future Collaboration

And for me, I feel like if I have that capability, I should be doing that, and I have a wasted life if I have capability and I don't exercise it. And so that's why I say I let the science lead our focus.

I let the science show us which way to go, because we're just following the dots where we're connecting them and following them. And we're letting the science lead us.

The last thing I ever thought seven years ago was that I would have my own probiotic gut health company. I was behind the scenes doing research for companies, you know, but then it was, out of a pure need.

We had to come out here and kind of do things differently, really to, to end up helping people and I. Oh, and then here's my another big why my parents made a lot of sacrifice to immigrate from Malaysia, India to the US.

And I think that process of immigration was the demise of their relationship in many ways. How had lots of health implications for my dad? Unfortunately. So they made a lot of sacrifices.

They left everything they knew in in where they grew up, where the all of the family lived to come here right in the land of opportunity, if you will.

And so my whole thing has been, if I don't maximize their sacrifice and make something of myself and help people and do the best I can, that I'm really, bastardized in all of their sacrifice, right?

So that's a big driver for me as well. You know, that's fantastic. I do think that, I really pray that it's was worth the journey for them. It definitely is manifested in you.

You know, you're the prodigy of that. And, you know, I came from another country, too. And, I just think it's the greatest land in the world, you know, like, I'm happy to be here and be doing stuff.

And and I just, I just wake up every day grateful. The other thing I'm really grateful for is, is the fact that we can be health coaches and get the support of the scientific community, you know, like, they're really, in a sense, on our side.

Now, there's less scientific community behind physicians, too, because, you know, there's there's, times for medical, like, if you have Ebola virus, you get off a plane from West Africa and your temperature's 105, you don't call your nutritionist, you know, you you go, right, because you need science at a whole nother level.

You know, like intervention, you know, like heroic. You need attendant care, like, right away or you're going to die. You know, those kind of tests, like, I can't capitalize on the information because the the downward spiral is so compressed that, what I might observe about their even microbiome probably isn't very important in those moments, you know?

But once you're out of the woods, then they're fair game for for us. And, Yeah, the wonderful partnership. I'm really proud. Let's finish, which is anything else we could be doing here.

We're we're doing these summits. You know, we you're the keynote speaker at our health, coaching conference in the fall, and I know you're, again, except for this year being what it is, you're out there doing 30, 40, even 50 lectures a year.

Is there anything else we could be doing? Not that we aren't already doing a lot. Yeah. You know what? What I would love to do is, you know, I, I think you're at once you're you're already doing the the microbiome tests.

I know you're checking that out and going through the analytics side of it with your team. You know, assuming that that works out, to, to meet your needs in terms of a, a good functional test, what would be really awesome is through your functional, diagnostic nutrition, community as they start utilizing that tests, we should work together on collating data from it, you know, and give it, which may give us really big, interesting big picture understandings of what we're seeing in general.

Right. Like, for example, we could work together and go, okay, so in people with this kind of symptomology, here's what we tend to see within their microbiome, over this kind of issue or this kind of, you know, developmental, dysfunction.

Here's the type of things that we tend to see because we can pull that kind of information from the microbiome testing. So if we we work together and coordinate with, with a lot of the people within your community that do the testing, we can really find some, some diamonds in the rough.

We might be able to make a discovery that nobody else has made. You know, we might be able to make a discovery. You could say, you know, hey, health coaches in everyone that every one of your clients that doesn't sleep well, that has a hard time going to sleep, do the microbiome tests and then let's collate all of their tests and we can mine the data and go, okay, among people that have a really hard time falling asleep, here are the bacterial signatures that we tend to see.

You know, we can make discoveries like that together as a community. We collaborate together. So that's one of the things that I'm excited about. I think we should we should try to figure out as we get this rolling, within the community.

It's an amazing vision. And I want to tell you, I have the liaise. I've got, a company now that we're working with, that, is we are putting all our. Did we just start doing it?

It's actually, it might lead to some form of artificial intelligence. Who knows? But, it it it begins with, an objective, you know, assessment of the, the, the data, the criteria and things.

So, I've got the perfect solution to that. And we're doing it. Okay, man, I love it. Let's do it. We go. Yeah. We're shaking the virtual shake on it. I'm confident if we do that together, we'll we'll make discoveries that can really impact people and, amazingly positive way.

So, so I would love to do that. We should we should collaborate on that. Because the way I think of it, I mean, you've got, you know, a few thousand, PhD ends and they've got hundreds of clients each at some point, we will very easily have tens of thousands of tests done, data sitting there that can be mined in so many ways that we can make discoveries.

Okay. Come on. It's been a real pleasure. I I'm totally game with that. That's a done deal. We're doing it. And, I want to advise, everyone listening.

Information about current and, will be in the show notes, but, remember to go buy your VIP pass. You've access this. You can watch this thing a couple of times because we laid out some gems for you.

And, so go buy your VIP pass, and, we'll be meeting again soon. Foreign. Thank you so much for being here. It's been a great pleasure. Very educational and entertaining, too. So.

Can't be.