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Episode 154 – Achieving Optimum Health by Healing Your Gut and Microbiome

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- Jonathan:** Welcome everyone to another episode of Empowering You Organically. I'm your host Jonathan Hunsaker joined by my cohost TeriAnn Trevenen.
- TeriAnn:** Hey everyone.
- Jonathan:** We have a very special guest today. Pedram Shojai who has joined us. Pedram, thanks for joining us.
- Pedram:** Hey. Great to be here. Nice to see you guys.
- TeriAnn:** It's awesome to have you.
- Jonathan:** TeriAnn, do you want to go over Pedram's bio real quick?
- TeriAnn:** Absolutely. We're so excited to have Pedram here. He is a man with many titles. He is the founder of well.org, the New York Times bestselling author of the Urban Monk, Rise and Shine, and The Art of Stopping Time. He's the producer and director of the movies Vitality, Origins, and Prosperity. In his spare time, he's also a Taoist Abbot, a doctor of oriental medicine, a kung fu world traveler, a fierce global green warrior, and avid backpacker, a devout alchemist, a Qi Gong Master, and an old school Jedi bio hacker working to preserve our natural world and wake us up to our full potential.
- Jonathan:** Dude, where do we start?
- TeriAnn:** I know. I want to start with the Jedi bio hacker. I love it.
- Jonathan:** Pedram, I have a feeling I'm gonna invite you back for several more shows if I can convince you, because just hearing your bio has me excited to hear about all sorts of stuff.
- TeriAnn:** So many things.

Jonathan: Instead of going down too many different rabbit holes, tell us what are you working on right now? What's your latest project?

Pedram: In all candor, I'm working on a house. We just moved. I moved my family to a Park City, Utah to be up in the mountains. I'm going from sea level to 85 50. Now I'm actually living higher than Machu-Picchu. Man, it's a couple flights of stairs and I'm like, oh. Yeah we're in the mountains. I'm making a transition because we're doing a ton of film this year. I've got four or five series and two films that we're producing. I'm adjusting my life style so I'm not out on the road as much. Because you can't just talk about work life balance, you got to live it. I got young kids and it's important to be with them. I just finished a really powerful, riveting project on the microbiome that really opened my eyes to just how inter connected we are with nature. Following that into a project on oral health. Doing a movie with Robert Kiyosaki, doing a feature film called Biome on basically how interacting our health with the natural rhythms of the world can bring in. We're gonna take a bunch of really sick people and make them better in the film. Then a bunch more. It's a loaded question because I can't stop. I just got so much going on.

TeriAnn: So many things. Can I ask you a question before you even dive into some of the projects that you're working on and some of your focus right now? Tell me about this idea of natural health, alternative medicine. We talk a lot about this on the podcast. Your big proponent for just so many things around the body and what we can do with our health, how did you get into this journey for yourself? How did you start down this path? Has this always been a part of your life or is this something that you came into at a certain point in your journey?

Pedram: I was pre-med at UCLA actually. Had a very contrasted life shall I say. I was interning at the pain medicine center and just watching miserable people get doped up on morphine and carted out. The other side of it was I started taking Tai Chi classes out in the park, out in the commons of UCLA and feeling this weird thing between my palms going what is that. One of these arcs was moving more towards fatality and pessimism and really just didn't have any energy in it. The other one was just full of life and blossoming. I'm like, I only got one chance at this thing called life. Am I gonna do something that is surrounding me with miserable people that I can't help or should I take a quantum leap and try to find something that can actually help people, make me happy, and help bring more vitality into the world? It became obvious. Go the Jedi route.

TeriAnn: That's beautiful. From going to being in school at UCLA, I'm just curious what was your next step after that? What was the stepping stone into where you are now? I know that realization and waking up, which a lot of people talk about in their health journey. But what was the next part of your adventure for you?

Pedram: It was a little clunky because when you do that, immigrant family get over here, become a doctor, make us proud. Rank number one in my high school. I'm at UCLA and I'm like, yeah I don't want to do this. That's not easy for a young establishing ego. Then I'm like, now what? I turned to God frankly. I was like, yo if you're up there, I could sure use some help right now. Send me a clue. This story I'm gonna tell you doesn't normally

happen. I was in the university research library of UCLA walking down an aisle as I'm having this conversation in my head with God. A book falls out of a book shelf about 15 feet in front of me. I'm like, come on. I think someone's messing with me because obviously they must've heard my thoughts. I pick up the book. It's open to a story of a Daoist master carrying his disciples across this raging river by connecting his lower energy center. I'm like, what is this? Since I had asked for a clue and a book fell, I had the where withal enough to be like, I should probably read this book. Read it that night, found a Daoist kung fu master 15 miles away. The next day dragged a friend in with me because now I'm just in weird woo, woo land.

Pedram: The teacher walked through this martial arts studio, walked right past my friend, straight up to me and goes I've been expecting you. My kung fu master still to this day. I got sucked into a lineage and became a monk and studied with the Dalai Lama. It's just been a magical mystery tour ever since. I have no idea. I just untethered and had faith and trusted. Here we are.

TeriAnn: That's awesome. You really are a Jedi. You really are. That's no joke.

Pedram: I wanted to be a Jedi as a kid. I thought that was fiction and then I started reading books realizing that it was all based on all these traditions that are alive and well. Decided to study them.

TeriAnn: Now you're a Jedi of life and health. That's really, really cool. That's a fascinating story. I appreciate you sharing that. I think so many people are gonna hear that. When we talk about journeys of health and things that we're gonna talk about today, people oftentimes have this awakening whether they're sick or whether they realize this isn't what I want to be doing. There's so much more to this. It's so black and white in this area but there's so much more beyond that. Your story is definitely a powerful story of you saw more beyond what you were doing when it came to life and health and beyond. You talk about energy and it's really just a fascinating story. Very, very cool. I appreciate you sharing that.

Pedram: Thank you. It's not all fun and games either. It's tumultuous. It's like being in the white water. Sometimes you're saying wee and sometimes you think you're gonna die. It's just you got to not hang on because if you're rigid, you drown. You've just got to let go and trust and learn and adapt. Then life just keeps bringing you cooler adventures.

TeriAnn: I love that.

Pedram: Sometimes it's really hard and that's fine too.

TeriAnn: Beautiful. Beautiful.

Jonathan: This is why we're gonna have you on a few more times. I want to dive into some of those deeper stories and learn more from you quite frankly. I'd love to learn more personally from you. I'm gonna go back to something you talk about on one of your

projects you're working on now and a buzz word that came up which is microbiome. We hear more and more of that. Can you just share with our audience what is the microbiome and do it in as simple terms as possible so that everybody can really understand and get it and know what we're talking about today?

Pedram: There's an ecosystem of life all around us. That sounds Jedi. But what the science has now shown is that we are much more intimately connected with all the life on the planet than we ever knew through the bacteria, viruses, protozoa, nematodes, even parasites that live inside our body. Because we are able to understand the genetics of basically the RNA for the most part. There's RNA and DNA that we can now analyze on these bugs. We're realizing that a lot of the human function, the things that we thought we were responsible for. These functions are actually attributed to these bacteria that are co-existing with us. The word is symbioses. All of this life in and around us is part of what makes us human and without it, we collapse and we fall ill. So I went and went to all the top universities from Harvard to Cal Tech. Basically traveled the country for well over a year really digging into the science of this being like, what is this and what are the implications. Man, it is unbelievable. All these auto immune conditions, all these chronic conditions that we're hearing about are all touched by the microbiome. If you don't have proper gut health and you're not supporting the life inside of you, there are entire systems that are collapsing that are leading to inflammation and chronic disease. We've just been looking through the wrong lens. It's just been a fascinating journey.

TeriAnn: Can I ask you a question about that too? Because I think that some people still struggle with the term ... you talk about microbiome and you talk about gut health. A lot of people talk about leaky gut. I think this is still something that people are still trying to accept and bring into more modern, mainstream medicine. What would you say to people that are like, is that really a thing? Is leaky gut really a thing? What would be your argument for that to people who are still trying to figure this out for themselves and they're questioning is this really something that's impacting my health?

Pedram: The challenge with the people who are questioning that is they're seeing doctors who are absolutely out of date in their information and are basically just stooges for the pharmaceutical companies. All the good doctors, anyone who's worth their salt in the medical industry now understands that this is the future of all medicine. There are entire departments at the universities that I've been at that went from immunology to studying the microbiome. I'm talking Harvard, I'm talking Cal Tech, I'm talking the top ... Johns Hopkins. The smartest people out there are going bananas over what's happening here. The doctors who don't understand this are like, bah. Those guys are just waiting to retire and can't wait until you get out of the office because they got golf coming up. You got to be careful where you get your information because there's some dinosaurs out there that don't really care about your health and consider being a doctor a job, job.

TeriAnn: It goes back to what you said about being open to what's out there. Being open to receiving information that's out there. It is something that people are still latching onto. It's so critical to our health.

Pedram: 17 years is the average time it takes for a new medical discovery to actually get to your main stream doctor's office for them to be implementing it in their care. After I left UCLA, I went and became a doctor in oriental medicine. Then I started medical group and had multiple doctors working for me. This is after the monk days. I realized that the incentive system was completely upside down in the western medical model because you diagnose and you treat with pharmacological agents. There was really no incentive to get people better. The business of medicine is all the moneys and procedures, the money is in chronic disease and people coming back. Just having higher escalation of claims. I talk to the smartest people that are trying to fix the insurance company problems. Understand that as you drive costs up, there's more money to be made. They are not factoring in the human suffering. They are not factoring in the fact that this does not work and it's broken. When they're talking about fixing health care and they're having a health care debate, they're having a health care finance debate. You want to have a healthcare debate? Let's talk about vegetables.

Pedram: Let's talk about stress. Let's talk about supplements. Let's talk about the microbiome. Who pays the exorbitant bills isn't what's gonna fix health care. What we do with our bodies and how we act in our day to day lifestyles, that's how you fix health care.

TeriAnn: We can be done right there today. Done. You just hit the nail on the head. Seriously. It's so true though. It's so driven by money and the financial side of things. I love that you just said that because it does go back to what we're putting in our body. Hands down. That's one of the most critical things. Speaking of what we put in our body and going back to the microbiome. Why is it so important? Talk about what that does for us. Let's talk a little bit further and dive a little deeper into what it does. You talk about the ecosystem. The ecosystem of our body and the microbiome and what people should really understand about it.

Pedram: If we were to go back to the origins of this, and the origins are actually prenatal medicine for mom. Getting mom ready to have a kid. Let's go a little further in the timeline and just talk about-

Pedram: ... a baby being born. 30% of mom's breast milk, these oligosaccharides that are secreted by mom, are indigestible by baby. They're specifically designed to feed the bacteria in the baby's gut that mom needs to have, not just support it but thrive, so that baby can be healthy.

Pedram: If you look at our evolutionary cycle and how we've grown to co-exist with these bacteria, we from the birth canal coming through, that's our first inoculation of what's out there and what bacteria are there. That bacteria becomes our seed colony that mom's breast milk then feeds. Mom starts secreting different types of bacteria into her vaginal canal at the end of life. Let's say in month eight or so, in the third trimester so that baby gets these bacteria coming through the vaginal canal, then is fed through these oligosaccharides in mom's breast milk, so that baby can have the bacteria it needs to thrive.

Pedram: Now fast forward here, you need to eat the fiber, the vegetables, the phytonutrients and all these things that these bacteria eat, not for you but for the bacteria. Then these bacteria create, in the postbiotic state, the metabolome. Then they start giving us energy, they start giving us amino acids. They start giving us all these other enzymes and cofactors that come through them, after we feed them. If we put them first and understand how to feed them, they take care of us and in turn we get less illness, less chronic disease, we have more energy, things work.

Pedram: We've just been so backwards about it because we had a false read on what bacteria are and what sterility really means. Now we're finding that every tissue, every organ in the body has bacteria associated with it. There's breast tissue that healthy breast tissue has certain bacteria around it and if you find cancerous breast tissue, there's other bacteria that have created an environment that now allows for cancer to appear. It is blowing the doors open on everything we know about medicine and this is just the beginning. I mean it is so exciting to be in the science of all this right now.

Jonathan: What stuff, what are people eating, what lifestyles are they doing that's destroying their microbiome or that's feeding the wrong bacteria? Are there things that they should eliminate from their diet and things they should add more to for their diet?

Pedram: Absolutely, I mean so broad strokes here because we're now crossing into this era of individualized personalized medicine where the answer for me isn't necessarily the answer for you. For me, I did an analysis of my microbiome and she just looks at it and she's like, "Dude, you're eating too much meat." I'm like, "What?" She's like, "You're not producing enough hydrochloric acid and the meat is putrefying in your guts and there's certain bacteria that only exist in putrefied meat that we're getting small traces of. I mean it's not terrible but you gotta fix this." Got it, right?

Pedram: What does that mean for my overall health is those bacteria were then putting out substances that were leading to inflammation. I cut back on my meat a little bit and adjusted for that and my arthritic hip started feeling better. You look at how we need to eat and who we need to feed, you start taking indigestible fiber, you start taking [inaudible] and you start taking prebiotics and you start taking probiotics like ferments.

Pedram: As I'm sitting here I'm sipping on kombucha. You take fermented foods and prebiotic foods with every single meal and you adjust for feeding the bacteria that help you thrive. And bringing down the bacteria, specifically like the yeast and the bad bacteria that thrive on sugars in particular, you'll start to notice a difference very quickly. Some people within a week have hallelujah moments, some people it takes longer, it just depends how ...

Pedram: People are like everyone's so used to six pack abs in eight minutes, that they missed the fact that they've burned 55 years eating and living one way and then after three days of a diet they're like, "It didn't work." For some people it takes a bit longer but it works and I've seen it time and again. We've interviewed thousands of patients coming out of all

these top institutions, people who had blood in their stool and just nasty, terrible things in their digestion.

Pedram: Fixing their diet, adjusting their microbiome, their brain fog went away, their anxiety and depression went away, their energy levels came back, they dropped 40 pounds, I mean it just goes on. I've interviewed so many of these people. Did it happen overnight? No, but did it happen in three months, six months? Yes. Six months from now you have a completely new body, you are a completely new human being and you lose the narrative of everything sucking and your life being miserable because your body isn't cooperating with you. Is that worth a dietary change? You tell me.

TeriAnn: Yeah. Tell me a little bit and just going off of what you just said about people's lives changing and it takes time. Talk a little bit about the microbiome and our immune system because you talk about the bacteria being in all those different tissue and breast cancer has a different kind of bacteria than healthy tissue does.

TeriAnn: Talk about the microbiome and the immune system. Everything I'm reading it's so critical to our immune system and talk a little bit about the research behind that and what we're seeing there in long-term health. People being healthy over a long periods of time and that link to our immune system, how critical that is.

Pedram: About 70% or so of our immune system is around our guts, it's called the gut associated lymphatic tissue. What happens is what we didn't understand before that's become abundantly clear now, is that the healthy bacteria, the colonies of bacteria that are secreting biofilm and creating neighborhoods for themselves. They change seasonally, they change over time, they change with altitude, everything changes, is they are acting as the sentinels between the outside world and the inside world and telling the immune system that everything is cool.

Pedram: What happens typically in the standard American diet is we will have really inflammatory foods. We will have foods that will tear a gut lining. The gluten tears the gut lining. Most people have issues with dairy, most people will have processed foods. What happens is once you start creating inflammation and tears in the lining of the gut, there are food particles that will sneak through and the immune system says, "Hey, you're not supposed to be on this side."

Pedram: It will start to create antibodies to those food particles as foreign invaders. Now you're allergic to turkey, now you're allergic to broccoli. Whatever it was that you were eating, you're starting to develop allergies to and the most common ones are wheat and dairy and then the immune system starts to become hyper-mobilized because the wall has been breached.

Pedram: Now, well before that wall was breached, there's a breach in the microbiome in the colonies that are there to support. If you let your microbiome colonies collapse and you let the bad guys grow and harbor more bad guy colonies, for lack of a better way to describe it, what they poop out is toxic to your intestinal lining and it will start to break

that wall. Next time you have dairy, next time you have a milkshake, that is now setting off your immune system.

Pedram: Most people are having all these immune issues, not because their immune system is weak, it's because their immune system is biting a raging battle on multiple fronts because there's a tear on the inside. It's like saying there's no money for books and schools and roads because we've been at war for 10 years. You can't heal if your immune system is constantly battling and that all starts in the gut and that all has to do with how the microbiome is informing the immune system to either attack or to relax and it will do so based on what is in there.

Pedram: If it senses danger your body is at war. It's a lot more complicated than that but for clarity's sake let's just say, when you have an inflammatory cascade that sets off your immune system, there's a very good chance your microbiome colonies have been compromised. And you need to readjust what bacteria you are harboring and they will then help bring down that inflammation.

Pedram: They will help control that wall and then your body can heal and once your body's healed you'll find that all those immune issues that you're having will start to come down. Any functional medicine doctor that knows what they're doing can fix that in three weeks to a year, depending on how severe the case is.

Jonathan: You talk about the microbiome and talking about bacteria, what role do parasites play in all of this because I've been doing some research and I was looking to start a parasite cleanse thinking, oh you gotta get the parasites out. The same time it's like taking an antibiotic right? I don't necessarily want to take an antibiotic and just kill all the bacteria that's in my body, I'm destroying the microbiome. How do parasites play a role and what's your take on that?

Pedram: The short answer to that would be, we're just starting to figure that out. We're finding that there's certain parasites that help bring down your blood sugar. There's certain parasites that will help you offset certain disease processes. It's like oh my goodness, some of these parasites even belong in the right quantities.

Pedram: We live in a world where Lucifer was ejected from heaven and now everything is black and white, either it's good or evil. If it's a parasite we gotta nuke it and now we're like, "Ah man, it's way more layered than that." Some of these parasites are our friends, some of them aren't. Very specifically some of them are really bad and you gotta get rid of them, other ones were like wow, in a certain proportion these parasites are actually part of a functioning ecosystem that makes the body thrive.

Pedram: We're just starting to figure this out but all of this all or nothing mentality has been really challenged now by the science and everyone's having to open their eyes and open their minds. From the hard science all the way to the hippy dippy practitioners who are doing just random parasite cleanses on everybody, right? Somewhere in the middle is

reality and we're starting to have an open minded scientific approach to just figuring out what's up and it's gonna be different for Jonathan than it is for Pedram.

Jonathan: Right, absolutely. Now I mean are you finding that mainly it's just adjusting diet and you'll ultimately feed the good bacteria? Likely we'll find out we're feeding the good parasites and eliminating the bad stuff ultimately makes that transition. Is it imperative to have the prebiotics and probiotics and the sauerkraut and the kombucha and the things like that, to get the good bacteria in or can you simply shift it just by shifting diet and feeding the good ones and the bad ones dying off?

Pedram: Unclear is what I'll have to say to that because we are learning a lot about a lot. Let's just go back to this thing called the refrigerator. Before we understood how to refrigerate food, the way we preserved it is we fermented it. For hundreds of thousands of years we have developed in some sort of synergistic relationship with certain bacteria through our ferments, that now are missing by our psychology.

Pedram: To a certain extent I would say and I recommend this to my patients is just eat a lot of ferments, a lot of different kinds of ferments and have a lot of variety of ferments because we just aren't having that anymore. In the old days I'd walk out to the creek out here, stick my head in the water and just drink it, dirt, bacteria and all because that was just part of what came into my body.

Pedram: Now it's like, "Oh my God, I can't do that. It's so dirty I'm gonna die." We are a very different species in the last three generations, from adding all the petrochemicals and the toxins and the plastics and that whole story, to isolating ourselves from that natural environment and not getting the same kind of bacteria. Also just the nutrients coming from healthier soil and all these things is we have shifted so dramatically that I say absolutely, you gotta change your diet and do it.

Pedram: Absolutely eat ferments but I also recommend supplements and phytonutrients and probiotics and all sorts of extra fiber to people now. Just because the diet and the food system and the supply chain has changed so much that we need all the help we can get. It sounds great to go live like on Little House On the Prairie, it's just the world is very different and you're still getting toxins from China raining down on you wherever you think you're hiding. We're in a different world now, we have to change in accordance to that.

TeriAnn: Absolutely. Let's talk about, go back to the immune system for a minute. We talk about that inflammatory response. Let's talk a little bit about the microbiome and chronic disease because it starts with our immune system being compromised, it starts with inflammation. Talk a little bit about that and if people aren't taking care of their body.

TeriAnn: You talk about people going to someone and within three weeks to a year, everything can change for them but let's talk about what three weeks to a year can do if you're not changing things for yourself and what the microbiome means to the world when it comes to chronic disease.

Pedram: Man, just give me six good hours in Vegas and I could change a lot overnight, you know what I mean? It's really easy to take a turn south and really wake up sick and compromised. You could live really well six days out of the week and go binge on something and never get healthy and so I think that there is also this feast or famine mentality with health that we need to look at because there is no hail Mary.

Pedram: It's now people are getting stem cells and all sorts of things trying to make up for life's past mistakes type of thing. There's just no substitute really for good, clean, healthy living all the time. Does that mean never have a glass of wine? No, of course not but you can go south way faster than you could heal and recover from it. With wisdom and age you start to learn that it just ain't worth it and so you just start acting more responsibly towards your body.

Pedram: That said I mean look, your cells in your stomach, every couple days are brand new. Your skin is shedding, you've got new skin every few days. Every seven years your entire body is brand new and so what remains fixed is your operating system and your habits and the way mom used to cook and the way you cook because of the way mom used to cook or the way mom never cooks, so now all you do is Chinese.

Pedram: All of these habits that have created this human progression, this system or this progression of this dream that is you. Unless you can change the thought form, unless you could change the habits of the human, there is no miracle pill, there is no hail Mary, there's no doctor that you haven't met yet that's gonna have all the solutions. We're falling into this weird it's like the Godfather, whacking people all week and going and begging for forgiveness from the pope and just being absolved.

Pedram: That's not how medicine is supposed to be, you're supposed to have good, clean, healthy living and then when things go south your doctor works with you to adjust it a little bit. That's not where the money is being made, that's not how the healthcare system is oriented and I think that's why we are in the mess that we're in is because it's become a transactional third-party system, where somehow the doctor is supposed to fix you. You gotta fix you man, that's it. I'm sorry I don't have a popular message there but if you don't do the work-

TeriAnn: I love that though, that's the truth of the matter right there. That's not the popular message but I mean that's the truth, you have to work on your own body first and foremost, no one's gonna fix it for you.

Jonathan: Everybody wants the magic pill, everybody wants the one size fits all. Tell me the one diet, the one true diet that's gonna fix me and be right and everybody's different, completely different.

Pedram: I thought the magic word was keto this week.

Jonathan: It is.

Pedram: Right? It's like every single diet that comes to pass is just another fad and people are just waiting to be told what's next instead of waking up to what their body's telling them and how to ... It's like how did I feel after I ate that carrot? Versus they said, "Oh eat carrots." There is a complete revolution happening in how you are to look at your own health, your own trajectory in health.

Pedram: My kids have very different palates and if I try to feed them the same thing I'm a moron. I've learned that my daughter has a very different kind of taste buds and she actually harbors slightly different bacteria than my son. We've tested it and so it's like we feed them slightly differently based on what helps them thrive.

Pedram: That's where everything is going, not sit down and finish your damn plate or you can't get up or you don't get dessert. We're coming from a sleep walking generation and we are now waking up to this and we have to wake up to all these bad habits that we inherited from our folks.

Jonathan: Yeah, so you just talked about getting the bacteria tested in your two kids, which is something I want to do. How are you doing that, are you just getting that with your naturopath or do you have a-

Pedram: I order it because I still keep myself in medicine a little bit but there's a consumer test called Viome that I like a lot. I've done a lot of work with them, they do RNA testing, it's just a couple hundred-bucks.

Pedram: You just swab a little poop and send it in the mail, and get all sorts of really good data back. And so, I've also done doctor's data. I've done a bunch of them just because I have all these friends in functional medicine. Some of them you have to do in clinic. Viome is just B to C. You could just go on viome.com and get it. And you get a lot of data from these tests, and you can glean a lot.

Pedram: Like for me, I would force feed myself these dumb kale salads because kale was allegedly good for me. You know, keto, keto right? So you hear all these words like keto and kale and you're like, "Oh, man, I should eat more kale." Turns out I don't have the bacteria that break down the oxalates in kale. And so, I would eat a kale salad and feel bloated and tired and be like, "Dude, being healthy sucks." Right? [inaudible] And then I started helping support those a little bit, and now I can eat more kale because I have the bacteria that break down the oxalates, but until I knew that, I was just feeling like a loser because I was eating salads and not feeling what the book said I should have felt, right? It's not for me.

TeriAnn: No, and I think that's such an important concept. We have hit on this so many times on our podcast that your body is unique and it's different for everyone, and just asked people to go and figure out what works for them, get tested for different things. You literally just gave an example and what we talk about all the time on a very detailed level, like kale does not work for me. Everybody says eat kale, eat kale, eat kale, eat kale. It doesn't work for you. And so, sometimes people are going and doing these

healthy protocols and they're like, "But I don't feel better," or, "I'm not feeling well." Well, maybe that's not what you need.

TeriAnn: It's just fascinating that we have all of this accessibility to these tests and things that can tell us what we need, and we're not utilizing them. We could feel so good. We could feel at our very best just in things like kale doesn't work for me, which I think is super interesting. I would have never thought that you could be tested and realize that kale is not something that works for your body at that level down to bacteria. And I think that's going to be super fascinating for people listening today even down to that level in our body, when we talk about our body being an ecosystem, it goes so deep. The layers are so deep. We're just peeling back the layers of the microbiome like you were talking about. Super interesting.

Pedram: It's been great. I studied with the Dalai Lama, I've studied with a lot of very special human beings in my life. And I can tell you right now, if you were to ask the Dalai Lama, he would tell you, "You da Buddha." Right? It's not like, "Oh, look at me, I'm the Dalai Lama. Kiss the ring. Do what I say." It's just like, "Look, you need to awaken to the innate wisdom inside your own body and figure out what's best for you." And the problem is, we live in a society where everyone is waiting for the next guru to tell them what to do. Right?

Pedram: Health, personal development, politics, everything. Everyone's just, "Tell me how to vote, tell me what to do." And it's just like no one's thinking for themselves, and that is an epidemic that's led to our healthcare crisis, that's led to our obesity crisis. It's led to a lot of things, right? Lots of people ... suicide rates going up. It's like no one even thinks for themselves anymore, right?

Pedram: And so, these are the things we need to change. And here's the good news, there's a silver lining here: is when you start eating a little better, you start nurturing your microbiome, anxiety and depression start to fade, brain fog starts to fade, you start feeling better, you have more agency, you have more blood flow to your pre- frontal cortex. You can say no to the cheesecake easier. Every good decisions leads to better decisions, and eventually, the fog lifts and you're thinking clearly, and you're like, "You know what? Why don't we go for a walk instead?"

Pedram: Right? And these kind of upward spiral decisions happen starting with the next meal that's in front of you. And if you blow that meal, you got another opportunity in the next meal. And just keep making good decisions until that becomes the habit, right? You don't have to do it all at once. Everyone's like, "Oh, well, you know, I'm 43 years old, now I gotta do a month-long fast and put colonics in my body and scrape my eyeball," or whatever the hell else people are doing right now, so they feel like they're absolving themselves of life's sins instead of just eating and extra vegetable with lunch today and starting there. Right?

Pedram: And so, it's like this all or nothing thing instead of just being like, "Alright, how do I start making slightly better decisions and letting those inform my next decision?"

TeriAnn: Yeah.

Jonathan: And not to mention, we're more connected now than we've ever been with the internet and with information, yet a lot of people choose to spend that time on Facebook and Instagram and following what everybody else is doing rather than edu- ... There's tons of free information out there to learn about all of these subjects we're talking about. That's why we do a podcast. There's so many podcasts out there that you can listen and learn and just up your game in so many ways that it is a shame that there's a lot of people that are just waiting to be told what to do.

Jonathan: I think we're waking up. I think we're transitioning beyond that point. At least I hope we are. So, and I know that you're really big on educating people and giving a lot of information. Let's talk about your docu-series that you have coming up. And it's all specifically about the microbiome, correct?

Pedram: Yeah, yeah. It's called, "Interconnected," and it has become just this obsession in my life because what became something that ... I was reading up on all this all. I've just been nerding out about this microbiome thing for a long time because, I mean, really, it's kind of Yoda-like, right? The force is all around you and life around you is all connected. I'm like, "Wow ... the research is starting to say that," right?

Pedram: And the more I started reading it, the more it started making sense. And now, I've got the guys at Caltech and MIT and Harvard on speed dial, and these guys are just feeding me research, being like, "Check this out." Right? And it's just gotten to the point where I'm like, "Man, I need ... " It got to the point a year ago where I was like, "Man, I need to do this. I need to actually make a series about this."

Pedram: And so, we spent well over a year going to all the top doctors, functional medicine doctors, and research institutions just downloading the story. And we've shared it with a few thousand people, and just blew their minds. It was really, it was a life-changing experience for people who finally connected the dots and were like, "Oh, my goodness! I am gonna start eating right starting right now, and now I understand why," right?

Pedram: And it really brought it home because once you understand what life is and how life thrives in and around your body, you then ... You know, it's like I'm taking this concept of pro-life back, right? Let's not talk about abortion, let's just talk about pro-life, right? When you start eating pro-life, when you start doing it in a way where you are supporting the friends that support your health, everything gets better.

Pedram: I've seen people that were bedridden, that couldn't leave the house because they would crap themselves, and had really, really bad illness, right? Just robust, smiling, vibrant, full of life, because they finally understood why, why they needed to change a couple habits and behaviors, and just couple unlocks, really. And so, the series, it's a nine part series, really gets into it from auto-immunity to thyroid to obesity. We really did a deep dive, and I thought, I was scared it would go over people's heads. They loved it. They gobbled it up.

Pedram: So, we've actually made it available ... basically, I'm probably gonna license it to medical students after this because there's so much interest by these organizations. But we're gonna share it with the world for free for live screening coming up soon. And it's just something that's part of my charter, which is share this stuff as much as you can, get it out there so people understand, because when people understand, that's when they make good decisions. Right?

Pedram: I could go to a doctor, he could say something that sounds really inconvenient, and be like, "That guy doesn't know what he's talking about. I'm gonna go to the next doctor," until someone tells me something I want to hear. But when I understand it, now I'm driving and I'm responsible.

Jonathan: Awesome. And so, it's a nine part docu-series and it's absolutely free for anybody to watch, correct?

Pedram: Yeah, yeah. We're gonna do a nine day free screening event. These things cost, it cost me a million dollars and change to produce, but part of our charter is to make it free for those nine days and share it with the world. And then, we have programs and companion guides and things that people can purchase from us if they enjoy and want to support our work. But part of our thing is just help people as much as they can, and it always comes around. We end up, this is my fifth movie/series, and we've helped millions of people with what we do. It's just a wonderful, benevolent model where you could help a lot of people, and then the people who want more help seek it out through you, and it just works out really well.

Jonathan: Yeah, I'm such a big believer in this process and doing it the way that you're doing it with the docu-series. Clearly, we've done some docu-series in the past, and there's just something to be said for changing up the way that we do things. It's not a, "Give me your money and I'll give you the solution," it's, "You know what? Let me just give you all the solutions. Let me give you all the answers. Let me give you everything that I have created for free, and if you like what we're doing and you want us to continue doing it, then support us." Right? And it's just a different model, and I think that whether you believe in karma or not, or energy or whatever's happening in the world and all this being connected, I feel like doing it that way just leaves a lot of rewards to come back to you. And I just, I don't know, it's just a much better process in my opinion.

Jonathan: And so, I love that you're doing it, I love that you're sharing it with the world for free. The URL for those that are listening is interconnectedseries.com. We'll have a link on empoweringyou.com website as well. But definitely go and register to watch it for free. I cannot wait for it to watch. I'll be tuning in every night to watch and learn from you, Pedram.

Jonathan: Teri, do you have anything more you want to-

TeriAnn: I want to ask one last question. I've been asking people this on the podcast. And before I ask you, I love what you said earlier. I'm gonna take this away from this podcast today:

wake up to the wisdom within yourself when it comes to your health. I love that so much. If there's one thing you could say to the world, your message, your mission, one last thing that you could say, what would you say to people about their health?

Pedram: It's your health, right? And it's your responsibility. So, if you're looking outside of yourself for answers, you could do that for information, but every thousand mile journey starts with the first step, and you are the one that has to take that step. If you're looking for someone to fix you, you have flipped your orientation and you're never gonna get healed.

Pedram: Once you step in and understand that the healer comes from within, and there's plenty of doctors and resources and information and books and sup- ... All that stuff is out there, right? But you have to commit to your healing, and once you decide that you are going to heal and nothing's gonna get in the way of that, that's when the healing starts.

TeriAnn: Love that. So powerful. Thank you so much, Pedram. I appreciate this conversation today. I have learned so much, and I cannot wait for your series.

Jonathan: Absolutely. Everybody go to interconnectedseries.com. You can also go to empoweringyouorganically.com. We will have the transcripts, we will have the show notes. You can watch the video of this if you're listening to us through iTunes. There will be links to Pedram's site and other projects that he's working on, you can learn more about him, well.org, everything else, the 50 million things he has going on. We'll link to all of it at empoweringyouorganically.com.

Jonathan: Pedram, I appreciate you, man. Thank you so much for taking the time. I'm gonna reach out after we're done recording here and see if we can book you for some future ones, 'cause I think you have a wealth of knowledge that the world needs to hear, and we'd love to be a part of getting that information out. So thank you so much for joining us.

TeriAnn: Thanks, Pedram.

Pedram: Thank you. It's been great. Thank you so much, both of you.

TeriAnn: Have a great day, everyone!

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Episode 154 – Achieving Optimum Health by Healing Your Gut and Microbiome