

John Berardi: [00:00:00](#) This path gets easier with compassion for yourself and your mistakes. It gets harder when we're hypercritical of the things we've done wrong. And so that's the tension and the balance. How do I learn from my mistake without beating myself up and forget it enough so that I can proceed with confidence moving forward?

Jon Vroman: [00:00:23](#) All right, front row dads, welcome to the show. This is the podcast for family men with businesses, not businessmen with families. And my guest today is John Berardi, a guy who I've been hearing about for a long time. And you know, one of my favorite parts of running a podcast is when I've heard somebody say, you need to talk with this person at least five to 10 times. And then I get the chance to talk to him and that's what's happening today. So a little bit about John and then we'll dig in. So John has been with his wife for 13 years. If four kids, nine seven, five and three probably most known for co-founding precision nutrition, which is the world's largest nutrition coaching education and software company. He's got a new book coming out called changemaker, which I'm pumped about and I've ordered my copy in advance. Uh, my audio copy, I should be specific about that. I'm excited to hear it. And also what I think is kind of cool is John was named one of the 20th smartest coaches in the world. And just a personal little cool thing here for me was that he coached UFC champ, George Saint Pierre a bit, which is pretty awesome. So John, welcome to front row dads. Man. I'm so glad you're here.

John Berardi: [00:01:37](#) Oh, thank you for having me. Thanks for the wonderful introduction. I never sure what to do with my face while I'm say things about me. Uh, I'm excited you ordered the audio book. You're going to like it. Some aspects of it because what I did a little different was I had a lot of the people who I talk about in the book because there's a lot of lessons I've learned over the years and a lot of them come from my life partner and as a parent. And so my family's in the book. So like my nine year old, you know, narrates her parts in the book. So it's really cool cause you get to hear the actual people saying the things rather than me saying the things that they would have said. So it's a neat little touch that we put into it that we as a family thought was special and I think it's going to translate pretty well.

Jon Vroman: [00:02:25](#) That's awesome man. I love that. You know, it's interesting is um, I thought about doing a PO, an uh, a show, a podcast, uh, where I ask the members of our group to have their kids record something about how they see their family and

John Berardi: [00:02:40](#) yeah, what they love about their dad and put that episode out. I love that actually this is one of my secret weapons that people are always so excited to hear about when I share it. And it's maybe not so secret of a weapon, but I just don't know a lot of people that do it. I read about this probably when we, our second child and was this idea that often as adults too, things like we, we kind of underestimate our children, right? And I used to catch myself doing it all the time, you know, like, you won't understand this or you won't be able to do this. Right? And with our, certainly with our first, I did it all the time and, uh, and I've learned better now that like, Whoa, wait, let me confirm first whether they can do it or not. And giving them the opportunity to try before I just go ahead and, you know, make a bunch of assumptions and frankly underestimate their maturity, their intellectual capability, their physical capabilities, and anyway, part and parcel with that is the idea that somehow I'm going to unilaterally become a better dad.

John Berardi: [00:03:47](#) Right? So I'm going to just, I think my way inside my own head with no feedback from the participants in the family experience, uh, to being a better dad. And I realize it's, it doesn't work that way, you know? And so the question that I learned and that I now ask each of our children, uh, basically quarterly, maybe once every couple of months, is, you know, Hey, listen, you, you know, that it's really important to me that we have a good relationship and that I can be a better dad. However I need to be a better dad. So I'm wondering, what ideas do you have for me to do better? Can you give me some suggestions for things I could do, more of things I could, I should do less of. And I learned that we could start that with as young as our three year olds and get meaningful feedback.

John Berardi: [00:04:39](#) And it's such a, so I'll give you an example. Yeah, that's where I was going. So this, we spend the summer away at a cottage together as a family, right? They're off school. If you think of life as a, and the projects you're working on, it's like a stove, you know, series of burners. I turn the burner way down on the work burner for the summer. It's still simmering, but in the family burner goes way up, right? So we spend this time at the cottage together. So leading up to that time, I sat the boys down, they wanted to give me feedback together. They're seven and five and they're best buds. And so I sat down and I asked him these questions, right? And every time I do this in my mind they're going to say certain thing and they never say that thing, you know, it's always something different.

John Berardi: [00:05:26](#) And so, uh, the, the two pieces of feedback they gave me where we love it, like we think you'd be a better dad if you know, you

had more fun with the kids, I think had just had more fun, silly playing around goofing around with us. One and two you worked less. And it was really some fascinating feedback because again, I didn't think they would say these two things. I thought they would say some other things. And second of all, like that second piece of feedback work less. I work less than pretty much any adult that I know.

John Berardi:

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So, you know, your first inclination is to be like, well listen kids, I need to give you a dose of reality about how the world works. I'm going to show you some people who really work a lot of hours and then you, you know, perspective giving. Right? But then I always try and step back, and this comes from my years of coaching, right? Insane. But I don't think that's going to be very effective. Uh, their experience is that I work too much. That's how they, their felt experience. So I wonder if there's a way to work the same amount but have them feel like it's less. Yeah. You know what I mean? Rather than random, making them feel like everyone else's somehow working more, you know what I mean? Like, Oh, doesn't this stuff to be them? See now, now I'm great. You know, but rather how can I change your felt experience of, of how I'm spending time with you versus how much time I'm working.

John Berardi:

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So anyway, I've thought about this a lot. I've put some strategies in place and then we went away for the summer together and so powerfully like one is that I asked them right, like they feel included in the process that it matters that I care what they think. Number two is that they saw me working on it all summer and I was giving them feedback on things. I was changing like, Hey, I'm going to try this for this week and we'll see how you guys feel about me having fun with the kids and work how much I'm doing. And so then not only are they like, Oh, dad's like doing the things we asked, but he cares enough to do the things that we ask. And by the end of the summer, it was really magical how much our relationship had changed for the better. So I'm not sure how it got off on this tangent.

John Berardi:

[00:07:39](#)

Oh, you were talking about your show and including the kids. Yeah. Any conversation about better parenting or daddy or mommy or whatever the case may be, absence of kids [inaudible] is missing something important? I think so. That was why I went off on that tangent. That's cool man. What play feel to your kids when they say more fun? What does that look like specifically to them? Yeah. Well I think what I discovered specifically was often adults will sit and watch the kids play. Yeah. At parks, uh, at the beach, you know, whatever the scenario might be. Right. You see the parents sitting on a park

bench or on a beach chair and the kids are digging in the sand and getting messy and playing and laughing, striving to sometimes and struggling. Right. So for them it was too much sitting on the bench or the in the beach chair.

John Berardi: [00:08:39](#) Not enough digging in the sand. You know, like we, we are really blessed. We have a place on the water on Lake Erie in Ontario, Canada. And so we park our boat just outside, you know, and the water. And so they'll just go out to the boat and they'll just dive off the boat for an hour. Right. And so if I was doing the classic, not playing as much, I'd just be sitting on the boat watching them and tell them to be careful. You know what I mean? Play more, might be showing them how to be careful by diving inappropriately. You know what I mean? Being like, Hey, if you do it this way, big splash, you know, it's safer and we have a lot of fun together, you know? So for them it's really sort of that level of engagement and participation, you know? And from that stems not only I think fun, right, but also learning and uh, overcoming obstacles, which I think they want as much as laughing and being giddy.

John Berardi: [00:09:36](#) Right. So how would you rate yourself now on a one to 10 scale, 10 knocking it out of the park on having fun with your kids? Uh, I probably went from like a four to seven, maybe there's still room for improvement for sure. You know, and uh, you know, it's, it's interesting cause Amanda and my, my wife and I, we'll play at different times in different ways with them. And so I think that it's, it's really nice that they get it rounded out like that. You know, like she like through here in Canada now and she's a, a former competitive figure skater and figure skating coach. So she takes them out on the ice and they play. And I, I don't love skating as much, but I take them sledding and we build snow forts together so we have our different modes of play as well.

John Berardi: [00:10:22](#) You know what I mean? Yeah. Do you ever find, do you struggle with play when it's not the stuff you love to do? Like for example, you might love swimming and so jumping off a boat feels really great. You know, a lot of dads could resonate with that. But I remember when my youngest ocean, who's now five was, I would put him back a year or two and he would want to play these games where my wife and I, we could not figure out the game we play with these little characters. And there were moments when we'd look at each other and just say, this is so difficult to be engaged and have fun because we don't understand the rules and it's trying to understand his world that's trying to be engaged. But do you, have you experienced that also as a dad? Yeah. Yeah, completely.

John Berardi: [00:11:13](#) And those are those particular moments right there. Like for me it's the in between that's the problem. But when it is really like a weird game where I'm like, I would rather be something, I don't understand that something I don't like something I don't like something I don't understand. I can make up silly rules and be goofy too in that context, you know? And that's like another example of some of the, you know, not underestimating your children thing because sometimes that kind of creative free play. Is there a superpower? Like, like we keep more of it in our lives. Is that all exactly. You know what I mean? So it's like, okay, cool. How can I lean in? All right, how can I make this do something really zany or fun or silly? Uh, and how can I bring an unexpected character into this game that even, you know, like our five-year-old now, Brayden wouldn't consider right?

John Berardi: [00:12:05](#) Like, Oh my God, really, there's a flying sharp that just entered the game, dad, this is amazing. You know what I mean? And not ruin their fun too much either. Cause sometimes you're right, there'll be like, no, that's not how this game works. I don't think there are any rules. But apparently there is one now you just made it up against me. Hey, because you have so much experience with nutrition. Let me do my, I naturally want to go there for a moment and say, yeah, have you been able to integrate these concepts of having more fun and doing it in the kitchen around food with health and nutrition? And if so, what does that look like? Yeah, completely. That's an important part of our family life. So I'll start with movement and activity because I think that's an important driver, right? I think if kids aren't moving, then they're not as hungry and then they can afford to be pickier in their own minds.

John Berardi: [00:12:58](#) You know? So for us, there's a ton of physical activity, like we bought our kids. Fitbit's not as a means to encourage more movement, but as a way to figure out how much they're actually getting. And you know, our most active is our seven year old boy and he gets, and he averages 15,000 steps a day. And so he's just always on the go. But we have like a detached garage at our property, which we turned into a gym space. So there's a climbing rope in there and gymnastics rings and we put up a chin up bar, uh, for kids height, you know, that they can reach and there's gymnastics mats under them. And then we have all kinds of little kettlebells and dumbbells. So it's basically little versions of what we use. Yeah. To work out ourselves. Amanda and I, and uh, they're, they're in there every single night.

John Berardi: [00:13:44](#) And, uh, when it's nice out, we're running, you know, and we're playing. And uh, not just like, sometimes it's like daily, you

know? And so that I think is a really important driver. Again, when it's nice, the garage door stays open. And even when Amanda and I are doing our workout, the kids will come and go as they please, you know? And it's not like they're following an exercise program like we would do as adults. They'll just pick some things up, you know? Or they'll just knock out some pushups and then they'll go like pick dandelions for a few minutes and then come back in and do whatever. Right. And so we're just modeling. And then I think once they're that active, they develop an appetite, you know? And that's when [inaudible] provide them with the choices that are the healthier options. And so in our family, we kind of have a loose set of guidelines about breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

John Berardi:

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Anyway, so breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We pretty much just serve protein, vegetables, and fruits. Now if that feels like a low carb diet, anyone who has kids knows it's impossible to put kids on a low carb diet. Carbs are everywhere, you know what I mean? So we don't restrict carbs, we just don't feed them extra carbs. You know, I remember this dawned on me one time when the kids were a bit younger and we pulled up to a family that we were friends with and like, you know, the minivan life, so you're in the, it was like a grocery store parking lot or something and we'd pull up, our friends are right next to us. Our side sliding van door opens there, side sliding van door opens and parents are talking as we like go to drive away. All our kids are eating like goldfish crackers.

John Berardi:

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So carbs are everywhere, sugars and all that kind of stuff. So we're like, we're just, we're not going to restrict any of that stuff. We're just going to feed them protein, veggies and fruits, main meals. And then they'll get the carbs, however, through magical osmosis, you know, and uh, then they'll have a balanced mixed diet. Yeah. You know, so that's kind of how we treat it. Now we have four and each of them has different, you know, I dunno, orientation too. Foods and picking us are not. Our girls for example, are nine and our three year old are very, very open to trying all kinds of things. I took a picture of our three year old the other night. She had a plate of edamame salad, sushi, roasted chicken breasts, [inaudible]. Uh, she had a cup of hot tea and essential amino acid drink, you know, and these are all her choices, right?

John Berardi:

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And then our seven year old is the most active, but he's also the quote unquote pickiest or whatever. And so he has a more limited range of foods that he eats. But we've just found the ones that like for example, when it comes to veggies, he likes carrots and cucumbers. Cool. He pretty much gets those every

meal when it comes to fruits. He loves apples and bananas pretty much gets those every meal, you know. And then the protein sources vary. So, you know, for us it was just about consistently putting the healthy options in front of them. And then of course as adults, it starts with you, right? Like if you're like, you eat the healthy stuff, but we need the fun stuff, how could you ever teach them not to, to focus on the quote unquote healthier things. So that's, that's part of it.

John Berardi:

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And the other part that I think has been really important is we don't force like a limited eating window on them, which most people, when you think of it that way, but it's dinner time, sit down and eat your dinner. Don't get up until you finish. Right. What we've done is we've actually put in the kitchen along one of the walls, a low counter. It's a butcher block, low counter that's kid's size with kids chairs along it. And that's where we feed them. And if they walk away, it's fine. We just leave the food out until it gets finished, which it eventually will. It might take three hours, quote unquote finish dinner and it's fine. Right? So we just let eating via grazing thing that day if it happens to be a grazing thing that day. And so there's very little pressure from us rules, expectations.

John Berardi:

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It's just like, here's your dinner. Oh, you don't want that. That's okay, we'll just leave it on the counter and if you get hungry later you can have it and then they just, and they will get hungry later, you know? And what's, what's the philosophy behind that? I mean, I could guess, but I'd rather just ask you directly. Yeah. For us that it's just sort of this lower pressure around eating our children. Uh, we got introduced to Montessori methods early, so our children have gone to Montessori their whole lives and Montessori is a lot of things. But at the core of it is respecting sort of the agency autonomy and independence and preferences of children. And so we're like, if we're going to, I love that about their school and we can't counteract that at home, right? If a child doesn't want to go to an activity that we have planned and we're going to be late because they're either resistant or throwing a tantrum, the opposite of agency independence, autonomy and, and respect is picking them up and shoving them in the car even though you're like, but we're late and you need to go.

John Berardi:

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And once you're there, you're always happy. The opposite of respect and autonomy and agency, is that right? Same thing with food. Don't move until you eat your dinner. Well, it's stripping away their agency autonomy, their ability to choose their independence, their free thinking. These are all things that as adults, we desperately want them to have exact. Right, but

when they're kids and they're under our charge, we're like now all violate it now in the service of my own preferences and that's a short term win with a really longterm cost. Mm. Interesting. I'm going to completely go on a tangent, but it is connected here and that is, I want to immediately go back in time, John, to your childhood because you just talked about some of the things that you're doing with the intention of creating a specific type of vibe and culture in your family and I'm curious as to what happened in your family as a kid that you're bringing forward, like where did your family knock it out of the park?

John Berardi:

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What are you hoping to continue its legacy or tradition that you picked up as a young, a young boy? Yeah, I think my F my philosophy, it wasn't developed as a child. You know, my, my parents are immigrants from Italy and they're really great hearted people. Uh, at the same time uneducated, super, you know, literally I hadn't gone to school. I grew up in the fields and they just work. They, they worked really hard and a lot, you know, they cared a lot about us and they did their best. You know, for me, uh, this, what we're doing now, Amanda and I are doing now is super sort of intentional and based on what she learned as a teacher and what I learned as a coach, you know, so I went and did a PhD in exercise and nutritional biochemistry. That's what I did my terminal degree in.

John Berardi:

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But when I graduated there I realized, Oh gosh, they still didn't teach me how to be with people, you know, which is coaching. And so I had to go learn about change psychology and things like motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy, these well known and evidence-based coaching and counseling practices. And you know, you learn them in the context of working with adults who are seeing you as a coach under their own volition. And now you think about, okay, cool, how does this apply to parenting? These little people who, uh, I'm in charge of now. And you know, and then Amanda came at it from her background and she's got, uh, master's degrees in kinesiology, so exercise science and teaching. And she worked with kids with special exceptionalities when she was a teacher, so both gifted and children with learning disabilities. So she got to do a lot of one-on-one stuff rather than classroom work.

John Berardi:

[00:22:03](#)

And she did some classroom work, but it was mostly, you know, bringing one or two children out and working with them one-on-one. So she has this amazing toolkit, Oh, strategies for all these circumstances. So you take like someone super passionate about change psychology coaching and someone super passionate about and experience with children and you

put them together and you're like, okay, cool. You know, how do we develop a parenting philosophy? You know what I mean? And it's like a pedagogical approach, right? [inaudible] and super intentional. And, uh, and as I say all this, I'm like, and we still get it wrong a lot of the time. You know what I mean? And we still don't do a great job all the time, but we're super intentional about it and we're trying our best and some days we get, we do get it right. All right. So here's what I want to do.

John Berardi:

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I want to ask you all right. That was a nice, I want to, I wanted to step aside, step there for a second, but I want to come back to food. I want to wrap that up for a second and then I want to talk about what you just opened the door to maybe what isn't working as well. I want to talk about that. And then the other five things that your conversation has sparked in my mind and in my heart. But let me ask two other quick questions about food before we wrap it up. Put a bow on that. One is, I think you've mentioned amino acids with your three year old. Yeah. So if you can comment on supplements for kids, are they necessary? And if so, which ones are you doing in your opinion? Yeah, they're probably not necessary unless there's obviously a nutritional deficiency due to [inaudible].

John Berardi:

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It could be a acute illness. Like if a child's throwing a ton, then they probably need hydration and electrolytes, right? So there's, there's cute requirement for supplement in that case where you give them or light or whatever. There could be chronic due to food aversions or even food allergies, in which case you may give them a children's vitamin or maybe a fish oil or a protein supplement or whatever the case may be. Uh, also in, you know, I mean, the idea of supplements for kids framed this way would seem like absurd. Yeah. If, if, uh, you're parenting and you're not in a family that where the mother's breastfeeding, you give them a supplement. I mean, basically all children on formula are taking supplements, right? So for me, it's less can we unpack our cultural and judgmental expectations around the word supplement and just say, when would you give someone a nutrient that's not present in food?

John Berardi:

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Well, it's when it's an important nutrient that they're not getting from food. Right. So the reason our three year old, by the way, uses an essential amino acid drink is because she loves the taste of this particular one that I have. It's icy blue raspberry flavor. And so what I do is give her a whole cup of water with a tiny little pinch of this stuff. It makes the water blue, it has a little bit of a raspberry paste. And so she loves it and our five-year-old loves it. And the other two math, they don't ever drink it. They don't like it that much. So it's mostly like a taste and a

fun way to get more fluids in versus a supplemental thing. You know, when our children were younger, we did give them like a, uh, infant vitamin and fish oil. Now they, we don't give them any vitamins.

John Berardi:

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They eat a great mixed diet right now. But I do take fish oil up myself. And so the girls in particular always ask for some. So I give them a little half teaspoon. So it's it's, you know, it's again like do they, why would you use fish oil to get Omega three fatty acids, which we know are really important and healthy? Where would you get them otherwise from eating fish? Do the girls or do the kids eat a lot of fish? Not really. It's not on there preferences right now. So cool. Maybe I'll give him a little official if they asked for it. So that's kind of my philosophy on supplements and it's the same holds true for adults. So for the parents listening to, we just call it a needs analysis. Is there a gap in your intake either because of a food deficiency or because of an activity or a sport you do?

John Berardi:

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Yeah, if so, that's when you supplement. But universally saying X is good for all people is obviously absurd when I put it that way. But that's how people ask me the question all the time. I work out, should I take a protein supplement, which is essentially should all humans who work out take a protein supplement? And the answer is, of course not right. Humans who aren't getting enough food, protein would benefit from it though. So you have a couple of choices there. Yeah, yeah, totally. How about sugar? How do, how do you monitor sugar? I mean, I don't know if you heard, but kids like sugar, you mentioned the golden fish thing and I was cracking up man, just thinking about that. You know, how that's played out in our life because my, my wife is, I would just, I would just call her. I would, I would say she is very interested in health.

John Berardi:

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That is to put it, and I didn't even, did not even have, I think he had his first ice cream at four years old or five years old. Right. How does first soda, six years old or seven years old, that type of monitoring of their diets and wanting to, you know, but it's loosened up over time. It's loosened up over time. But how do you view sugar in your house, you know, and, and uh, the demands of the world coming in and infringing it, you know, putting itself into your home Halloween trick or treating that type of stuff. Right. Yeah. Again, borrowing from the Montessori philosophy, like are we going to teach our children rules? That's we ourselves either struggle to follow you can't or are we going to teach them self regulation? Yeah. You know, for us it's self regulation, right? Can we teach our children to make a good choice?

- John Berardi: [00:28:23](#) Probably the most commonly heard phrase in our house is I'd like you to make a good choice here. Yeah, I'd like you to think about what the right choice might be. I don't know if that's the best choice for you. What do you think might happen if you make that one? You know what I mean? So we go out and trick or treat for Halloween, you know, we went out this tier and Canada, you know, Thanksgiving and Halloween happened differently than us, but we went out trick or treating and um, I think so we brought him all the candy before kids gala. Right? And so the first thing they do is they catalog it, right? So they lay it all out on the living room floor and they categorize it by type, right? So like, here's all the recess, here's all the Twix, you know, here's all the Snickers, here's all the, um, sour patch kids, whatever.
- John Berardi: [00:29:20](#) And um, then they count them, right? And so we ended up with like 200 and something pieces of candy on living room floor, right? So we're like, okay, cool. What we want you to do is narrow it down. [inaudible] 10 pieces each. Okay? So you choose which 10 you want each of you. We'll end up with 40 pieces and the rest we're going to donate. Okay? So we'll take it tomorrow in the car. We'll donate to a food shelter or somewhere where we know people who didn't get enough food to eat last week could enjoy some of this candy. Uh, and then those are their 10 pieces. And then they can eat them all that night if they want or they can eat them over the next 10 days where they can distribute them however they like, you know, and if we see them about the plow through 10, we just remind them that it might not be a great choice.
- John Berardi: [00:30:15](#) And then this is again, part of this Montessori philosophy, which we buy into, which is, and what happens if they 10 pieces? Well then we let them experience the natural consequences, right. The natural consequences of 10 pieces of candy are not life threatening. Right. You know, so they, uh, maybe have an upset tummy or they feel totally crazy and they can't self regulate their emotions for awhile. Right. They're on a sugar high or they have diarrhea, whatever. And then we just connect the two. Right. And we say, Oh wow, that's really terrible that this diarrhea is happening. Hmm. I wonder if it has anything to do with the 10 pieces of candy. Right. Like God probably does. So then you let the consequence be connected to the action.
- Jon Vroman: [00:30:59](#) Right. I agree with that. I agree with that 100%. In fact, we just went through this this weekend because I was in Philadelphia with my 10 year old and he had several, he had soda at dinner. Right. Or on the plane he had soda and uh, and then he had a grilled cheese for lunch. I let him make choices all day long

about his food and then on the plane, and then he got really sick. And it was the exact conversation that you just talked about right there. And uh, yeah. Yeah. So it's interesting. I thought to myself, I'm such a good parent, this is gonna be so great. And then, and then I fast, I've, I've flashed forward there all the years of people going, Oh, I feel terrible. I'm never going to have another drink ever again. And then they're, you know, they're having like wine that night and I'm like, Oh, maybe that.

John Berardi: [00:31:47](#)

Right. Well, again, you know, for us it's continually reminding, like connecting the two, right? Because adults even have a hard time sometimes not developing superstitions, but actually recognizing cause and effect. So with our children, we can't expect them to do better than adults might in this context. So what we do is we just looped them back around consistently, you know? So for our, so again, for us, Oh, we don't have a lot of sugar in the house on a regular, you know, uh, and what we do have is chosen right? So, for example, our family likes ice cream a lot. So if there's sugar in the house, it's going to be ice cream and that's all the sugar there's going to be. And three of us are lactose intolerance. We have very a bunch of dairy free options and we have, so right now if you went to my freezer right this second, you'd probably find nine small containers of ice cream.

John Berardi: [00:32:40](#)

And that's our, is it not a mu? Uh, we, we really like so delicious. Okay, cool. Have you heard of not a new I have, yes. And I asked him, I'm one of the lactose intolerant ones and probably the love of ice cream is genetic. So for me, uh, I've tried every kind. So I've tried not a meal. I've tried all of them. I'm strongly in favor of, so delicious. As the number one show has been brought to you, I'm going to reach out to them for sponsorship immediately. And I've been to the Ben and Jerry's a plant. Yeah, three times in my life. So I have every reason to want Ben and Jerry's to be the best, but so delicious is number one for me. Yeah. So anyway, we don't have a lot of sugar in the house. We don't forbid it. We don't prohibit it.

John Berardi: [00:33:30](#)

I think, I think the, this is the, this is the start of unhealthy relationships with, you know, I don't think, no sugar diets are a prerequisite for health. Yeah. I mean literally eating fruits provides sugar, you know, so anyone who's like, we don't need sugar in our house is either lying to themselves or to the world or a monster, you know, because you do have sugar. It's packaged up in an Apple or an aplomb or banana or whatever, you know, so, Oh no, no, we just mean processed sugar, not, well, it all ends up glucose in the blood anyway. You know, I'm like, I know the biochemistry of how this stuff happens. So it's

not to say the same, like an ice cream is the same as an Apple. Cause with Apple you get fiber and other nutrients and stuff. But part of the reason that a lot of people are concerned about sugar is that sometimes if we eat a lot of sugar, we don't eat the other things that we need us as a human to thrive.

John Berardi:

[00:34:26](#)

So again, we are not afraid of sugar because we know, yeah, for breakfast, lunch and dinner, our children are going to get adequate protein, exactly all the micronutrients that they need from fruits and vegetables. And then if the rest of their carbs come from ice cream, that's fine. They're not displacing anything. You know, John, you mentioned something about, you know, basically sugar and maybe I misheard. So just let me, what I think I heard you say was about sugar causing a change in mood or behavior. [inaudible] did I hear that right? I potentially could write that. Somebody had said, and the reason I wanted to bring that up is because because of your background and your history, do you have thoughts on that? Because somebody on a, on our show recently and I remember who it is, I just, if I'm going to go against them, I don't want to pay up their name, but uh, that had said there's no evidence at all to suggest that sugar would cause like a crazy sugar high in a person.

John Berardi:

[00:35:24](#)

Do you have thoughts on that concept? Because that to me was like a wild statement that you could give a kid sugar and that's, that's something that we perceive is going to happen, but that there's no evidence behind actually being the case. [inaudible] I think probably the story has been overdeveloped. You know what I mean? That somehow that piece of one candy bar, it's going to lead to a child running frantically throughout the house. Uncontrolled that that's been a bit oversold. I mean literally it's [inaudible] as a parent you are hanging around with other parents volitionally or not. They ended up saying it like at least once a outing. You know what I mean? Like, Oh they're going to be bouncing off the walls, whatever. You hear it all the time. I think that's overplayed. But I think what people tend to do is when something's been overplayed, they like to fancy themselves on MythBuster and so then they overplay the opposite end of the pendulum slip.

John Berardi:

[00:36:23](#)

There's no evidence. It's not true. There's, it's like there's a high probability that in certain individuals, a lot of sugar will cause some kind of mood alteration. That makes a lot of sense in terms of how glucose, what it does, how it travels to the brain, et cetera. You know what there's not a lot of evidence for is that glucose would give you like energy to workout. You know what I mean? Like, Oh, it's going to give you a burst of energy to work out. Well only if you're a glycogen depleted. So the amount of

glucose in your body is super low and you're on fuse, and then you add some and the body's like, yeah, so I can use this. Now what it does do though is affect mood, right? And that's the bigger and more profound effect of a high sugar or carbohydrate intake before an activity.

John Berardi: [00:37:11](#) So there, there is enough evidence to suggest that yeah, it could affect mood, right? Yeah. And we all know this already, right? We know what eating does to a mood, right. How you feel after a meal. Uh, we know that different things can make us feel differently, you know? So there, there's, there was enough evidence to suggest that yeah. Too much sugar is probably going to create some kind of mood alteration. Some kids, you know. Yup. And you also mentioned lactose and tolerant maybe. Is that the term you used? But yes. When you maybe think about DNA testing, is that something that you believe in for your kids?

John Berardi: [00:37:51](#) Uh, we do. We do. We do. I mean, I wrote a book all about genetic testing and health and fitness with some colleagues. We published it for free on the internet. It's probably the most comprehensive thing on this subject that's written for it. It's called the lay person. Um, rather than a big, heavy scientific tone. And so as part of that, I did dozens of genetic tests on myself and then we did them on our children as well. We even did them on our children's grandparents. And so what we, I mean, I, I'm a super nerd sometimes and so this kind of stuff really intrigues me like, you know, can, what we wanted to first test was how reliable are genetics testing, uh, interventions, right? So I sent three or four of my own samples under different names to the same lab to see if they came back the same for example.

John Berardi: [00:38:41](#) So we wrote about that in the book. The next thing was, I mean there's a no one biological heritability of traits [inaudible] your genetics pairs, right? So theoretically if we had my parents and Amanda's parents DNA and then man and my DNA and then the kid's DNA, we should be able to watch it trace through three generations into the children. Right? And so using complex statistics and math, you can look at that. So we wanted to prove biological heritability of genetic traits. So we did that. So, you know, as as a means for the average family to optimize their health, no meaningless as a way, as a fun way to like dig into the magic of science and biology is a family super fun, right? Like you can sit down and say, Hey, when you, you know, as long as you engage them in your experience, Hey honey, what you were going to do is spit in these tubes and then we're going to send them off to the lab and then we watch a video on YouTube

about how they process DNA samples, right? And then they're going to send us a report and here's what the double helix looks like. Here's how the A's and the C's and the G's and the teas all bind together. Uh, and then it's going to tell us what you got from mom and what you got for me. Right? And so I'm looking at the reports. So as a learning, fun family learning, love it as a tool for improving their health and making like important decisions about what to eat or how to exercise.

Jon Vroman:

[00:40:06](#)

Just, you know, I, I that fascinates me that, that you, that you would say that, and I need to ask about this because, well my kids have done it and I've done it. And when I did my DNA test, I use the DNA company, which is a Canadian based company. We had it done at one of our dad's retreats that we did these tests and I got these results back and I worked with this doctor who had said, Hey, you don't process carbs and here's why. Because you know, or you don't process lactose really well and that's because you don't have this particular gene, not gene produces this enzyme and that breaks down lactose. Yeah. And I thought that was really, really helpful. And then Tatiana did it with the boys. That's my wife. She did it with the boys and she came back and said, and she did it in Russia, which is where she's from. And she came back and said, this DNA test showed that the kids have a high likelihood of being diabetic, right. That she's now used that with the kids to say, look, this thing right here shows that you have a high likelihood of diabetes and therefore we need to be extra careful with your sugar intake as a result of that. Yeah. In that, since it seems like it would be really beneficial [inaudible] but is that [inaudible] are we looking at it wrong? Is that just all glam and no functionality to that? Is that just somebody trying to,

John Berardi:

[00:41:22](#)

yeah, it's, I mean, yes, because the thing is there's, there's very few individual gene sets that code for something as complicated as diabetes for example. And we haven't mapped what they all are. So what all the research that's ever been done on this as associative. So a correlational. Yeah. So we're like, Oh, there is a population of people with diabetes they tend to have on these genetic pairs, this combination. Right. So people with diabetes have this combination. Yeah. 1% more of the time or whatever the case may be. Right. So it's associative, you know, it's like saying people who eat more meat may have a higher likelihood of getting cancer, but we don't know if that's because they eat less of other things. If they would have gotten a cancer anyway, it's just associative. It's, it's like saying, Hey, uh, every time it's raining, I go outside and people have their umbrellas up.

John Berardi: [00:42:24](#) Umbrellas cause raid. You know, it's just an association. It's not causal. And that's what all genetic research is today. It's, it's associates, right? Like you, you look and you say that umbrellas are up and it's raining, right? So if someone is very, very risk intolerant, they may look at this data and say, Oh crap, our kids are, have a high likelihood of diabetes. We need to avoid sugar. Right. The problem with that is, I mean, maybe there is no problem with it. I mean, it's just, it's, it's a philosophical choice. Yeah. You know, if you're less conservative, then you might say yes, but there's a whole bunch of genes playing into this that we haven't found relationships on. And so this map of diabetes is, is very incomplete. You know, we may have five of the 50, you know, pairs that are needed. So it's just so early, you know, now there are certain things that worked out pretty good.

John Berardi: [00:43:29](#) Like I color for example, you know, we kind of know where that lives on the genetic map. Well, you know, so it's interesting when you do a genetic test and it says your eyes are blue even though it never met you. You know what I mean? You're like, Oh shoot, they must be right everywhere else. Right. And it's not true. Like the lactose thing for example, it takes into account your heritage. So people from certain parts of the world have less lactase persistence, which means the enzyme stays, you know, in, in this lineage. And so, uh, it guesses based on that and some genetic things. That's why you'll see it has a likelihood, not a year, 100% lactose intolerant. And the truth is most of the things that genetic testing has a high degree of confidence on or things you would have known already. It's like, your hair color is black, your eyes are blue, and every time you have milk you far right.

John Berardi: [00:44:27](#) And you're like, I already knew that I didn't to pay for genetic tests, you know? So anyway, it's super early. There are exciting times ahead because the next wave of this is going to not be a genetic stuff, but epigenetic stuff, right? So genes are turned on or off. And that is what expresses a lot of the traits that we have in our daily lives that are the things that are important, like our sugar tolerance and all that. And that's epigenetic and there's different tests for that and they're just not affordable yet, you know? So [inaudible] genetic testing, I mean, again, we did a really comprehensive book with hundreds of scientific references is interesting as a learning experience and as a, uh, uh, just get to know myself a little better cause I'm curious, but as they

Jon Vroman: [00:45:23](#) real health tool,

John Berardi: [00:45:24](#) not very good. There's, there's only a couple of things that you can get from a genetic test and your doc would have measured them. You know, if if they suspected you had a genetic anomaly that was going to cause a real problem. [inaudible] the rest of them are kind of novelty items more than anything.

Jon Vroman: [00:45:42](#) All right guys, I want to take just a quick second to talk about something really important now and know you're listening to the show because you want to level up your game at home, but if you want to take the next step within front row dads, I want you to do something today which is text the words front row dads to three one four six six five one seven six, seven three separate words. Front row dads. It's not case sensitive. I want to send you a few things right away. First, I want to send you a recording from a masterclass that I recorded with my good friend and author of the miracle morning. Howe L rod is a father of two amazing human beings and we recorded a show called the five habits of a front row. Dad, I want to send that to you because I think it is well worth listening to.

Jon Vroman: [00:46:19](#) Second, I want to give you 45 minutes of a mind blowing conversation that I had with a woman named Kim and NAMI and the show is titled have better sex, hugely popular. This will rock your world and likely your spouses as well. But I want you to have access to this information. Number three, I want to give you access to 1300 other front row dads inside of our Facebook group where you can ask any question, share any win and give any resource that you think could be valuable to the community. And lastly, I want to include you in one email I send out each week. It's short, it's to the point and I pull from my life experiences along with the insights for more than 135 members of our brotherhood. I want to give you the best of the best in each email. So all you have to do is just text the words front row dads to three one four six six five one seven, six seven and we will get you started today. Yeah. God, John, this is so fun man. I, uh, I'm looking at the clock here and I'm going, dude, I want to ask you 10 more questions. Let's keep going. If you think listeners will hang with us. Are you kidding me man? This is, this is so great. This is just really fascinating. It's really

John Berardi: [00:47:30](#) fascinating. So, um, I'm really appreciative of you sharing your wisdom with us, you know, and your research and your experiences because I mentioned it and I want to honor the promise to the audience about getting to the places where I want to talk about where you're not doing great, John, because it looks like you're doing fantastic everywhere. I mean you sold a company that was valued at 200 million at the time or you sold 80% of your ownership, but it was you, you know, we hear

things like the cottage and summers off and like there is a lot that's dialed in for you in your life it seems. And by the way, congrats cause my my, you know, my sense is that I love seeing good guys win. I love seeing good guys succeed and make an impact in the world. And I don't know what stats were true with your company, but I love seeing that big impact on me.  
[inaudible]

John Berardi: [00:48:19](#) was this stat I heard of people that had been through your program maybe or something. I know, I mean we've, yeah we've coached 200,000 people and certified 100,000 pros. So I feel really grateful for the work that I've gotten into nutrition and the reach. Yes, you've got four kids, you've been married for 13 years. My point is, my point is there's a lot going well. So in that spirit of all the things going well, where do you want to get better? Where is John striving to improve? Where are you running into roadblocks, if you will? [inaudible] so, uh, two things for sure. One is, uh, so Amanda and I don't invest a lot in our relationship. It's intentional. Like we do that on purpose just because we have four children and we're investing a ton in them. It does have consequences sometimes. We're not always on the same page.

John Berardi: [00:49:11](#) Like we, we're not always vibing as well as we could and maybe would like to, you know, the ship sailed on the notion that's, you know, people are always like, [inaudible] you two need to just get away from the kids for awhile, you know, have some nights off, go away for a week. And I'm like, cool, great. You're watching the four. No, no one's volunteering for that. We ought to do the other thing, right. Part of our philosophy is just like, we wouldn't have had four kids if we were constantly trying to get away from them. Like right at this point [inaudible] we're all together all the time, you know, that's this chunk of life. Right. And if you look at life as a timeline, you realize that this is just a phase of life, right? They're going to grow up, they're going to have autonomy. Like we're, we're trying to teach them independence, self-reliance, autonomy.

John Berardi: [00:50:01](#) So we'll probably be really good at it at a younger age and know what more of it, you know. So we're like, cool, this is where we are right now. So that's, that's part one. Uh, Amanda and I aren't always on the same page. Are you on the same page with her on that, by the way? Yes. Yeah. Guys got this. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So it's just kinda, it's kind like our, our philosophy, if we could sum it up, would be, Hey, I like you. I love you. We're not spending a lot of time together. It's okay. Neither of us is going anywhere and in 10 or 15 years, it's all going to be fixed. Like the kids will grow up, they'll go about their lives and we'll be

able to spend that kind of time and invest in each other again. You cool for the next 10 or 15 years.

John Berardi:

[00:50:48](#)

Yeah. Cool. You, yeah, it's going to be fine. All right, high fives. Let's get back to the ship. You know? So that's kind of the philosophy of our, our relationship. But again, like that's great that we have a cord, but there are moments when we're not in complete alignment because we're not spending enough time together. It'd be like always vibing, you know, like you probably have moments like that with your partner. And I've had it with my business partner, I have it with my life partner, you know, where you just get each other and you've been talking enough and you've been investing enough to be like on the same wavelength. And then decisions are easy and you know what the other person's going to say and do and you don't have to ask or constantly check with them. You know? It's just like, Oh, we're on the same page.

John Berardi:

[00:51:36](#)

This is great. Well, it's not that way all the time, you know, because of this choice. Right. Because of how many things we're trying to do as a family and individually, you know, she has a whole bunch of projects she does professionally as well. So that's one, right. That's, that's the one thing that I think looking from the outside in, it's like, okay, that could be doing a little better there. You know, it could be spending a little time, a little more time together. And then the second thing is a parent is that I struggle consistently practicing the idea of allowing the children to choose. You know, like there, there's like a pyramid of things that like build up, you know, where I'm like, not as patient, not as willing to be like, okay, we're going to be late for your dance class. And you're saying you don't want to go to dance class now and I know you love dance class and you're so happy being there and that's on the plan for tonight.

John Berardi:

[00:52:37](#)

And after dance class I have to pick up your brother at this other thing. So if we don't do this, then I have to figure out a whole nother plan for the night. Well you get in the car, you know, no, not getting in car dad, you know, I do that. Okay. Sometimes. And other times it's just not as easy for me to do. You know? Amanda's way better. Let me get this. She is more consistently practices and the way that I would describe it is I grew up in a house where people got louder. Amanda gets quieter in the same moment, and it's really a nice thing to watch and it's something that I just keep trying to practice getting better at the more animated, angry, frustrated the children get, her demeanor just gets calmer and quieter. Right. You know, they could just be like, you're the worst mom in the, and she'll be like, Oh honey, I know you don't think that about me.

- John Berardi: [00:53:36](#) Now I know. Like I know that it doesn't feel good to her. I know that she wants to yell back, you know, but she has this practice, you know, they, you call it discipline, but it's, it's, I, I think you begin with discipline and it becomes habit. She has this habit of not being that way and I'm just like, Oh, that's so freaking amazing. Gosh, I wish I could do that. Have you had wins there? Are you? I have. Yes. And, and, and just like, you know, in my old world in nutrition, it's really important not to over count your wins and undercount your and where are you did poorly, people do this with food all the time, right? They eat 21 times in a week, right? And they had like eight good meals. Not like I crushed it this week cause all the remembering is the eight good ones, but they're not remembering all the bad ones.
- John Berardi: [00:54:27](#) Now when it comes to food, the food doesn't have feelings, you know, and it's not a future relationship that you need with that thing back with kids it's different, right? If you overcome it, your wins, you could really be having this deep blind spot where the children think most of the time you're impatient yell too much, don't give them any self respect or dignity and you're counting all the times you did. So you're thinking you're crushing it. You know what I mean? And it's the gap, you know, the gap between how they see the experience and how you see it because they are thinking, feeling entities who will remember, you know, so for me it's not how do I be perfect at this, but how do I close the gap? You know, like how do I do that last? How do I raise my voice less?
- John Berardi: [00:55:14](#) How do I be forceful and domineering, less, you know? And part of it starts with philosophy. You know, the like we have to accept this adults that's, there is a behavior that could be thought of as bullying that we could do with our kids. Yes. You know what I mean? Get in the car. I'll take away this. If you don't, I'll physically grab you and restrain you. I'll put you where I need you to be. Right. If a bigger child was doing that to our kids at school, it would be called bullying and we'd be pissed. Do you know, how would you distinguish strong fatherly leadership with certainty versus bullying? What are the nuances there in your mind? What makes them different? Yeah, I mean I think that uh, and again this just exists within the philosophy that we've chosen to raise our children through school with and at home ref and I again, I often think in terms of internally consistent systems and I learned this from the scientific community, right?
- John Berardi: [00:56:19](#) Like sometimes all the parts have to play together for the thing to work. You pull one little thing out from someone else's system dropping in yours and hope it's going to work. Right,

right. The nutrition example I always used to give was uh, in the Western world we're like green tea, remembering green tea had its moment. Everyone drinking green tea cause it's so healthy and they were doing it in China and look at their disease rates and it's like, Oh wait, wait. But they have a whole internally consistent system of how they practice life. The green tea is just part of it and it's not just drinking tea. They have a tea ritual that happens in the middle of their day. Were there like just drink tea. That's it. And we're like, yeah, I'm just going to have this tea while I'm working. She thought, I mean as if it's going to be magical.

John Berardi:

[00:57:01](#)

No, that's the system, not the one element. So anyway, this is all my caveats around this, which is we believe leadership is by example, not by authority. One of my favorite books I've ever read, and this really changed my mind on parenting, was hold onto your kids by Gordon Neufeld. No, but my buddy Hal just told me about it. Okay. So I've read a bunch of parenting books and education books and Montessori books and all kinds of things to try and circumnavigate this thing we're trying to do. Right. Be with children effectively. And it's the one that's affected me the most. And in it, the fundamental premise is that children are looking for attachment to someone who can guide them through life successfully. So that could be safety and security. Physically. It could be food provision, it could be moral and ethical choices. Right. But they don't know.

John Berardi:

[00:58:04](#)

They don't have tools and skills yet and they're trying to figure out the world. Yeah. And they're looking for someone to look to, you know, to teach them and they choose. You know what I mean? You can't force a child to make you their mentor. You know what I mean? You can force them to put on clothes. You can threaten to take away safety and security if they don't follow your rules. But you can't force them to pick you as the one to be attached to. And to learn from that is inside their own mind and they get to choose. And that way too have them consistently choose you over and over again is to place the attachment bond. Even over discipline. You know, all the notions. We might wrap up with leadership as the positive framing of the word, you know what I mean?

John Berardi:

[00:58:54](#)

But what is leadership? Well, what we think is, uh, instruction like academic, you know, pedagogical. We think it's discipline. You know, we think it's all these things, a moral compass, but you can't make any child allow you to be their leader. And so in hold on to your kids were sort of presented this very compelling argument for why attachment always has to come first. Why the primacy of that bond that your children need to want you to

be their guy. Because if it's not you, they'll look at peers and starting as early as like nine years old and that's a disaster, right? A bunch of nine year olds looking to each other at the same time for moral guidance, for safety, insecurity, for acceptance of who they are. Oh God. Like that's a real problem, right? Yeah. So anyway, for those who end up picking up the book, I have a couple warranties.

John Berardi:

[00:59:52](#)

One is, it's long. I think it's too long. It's too long of a book. Second of all, the payoff comes at the end. So there were a few moments in that book where I almost was like, I can't, I can't take it anymore, Gordon. Right? It's dragging this out a little bit. But at the very last few chapters are all practical application stuff that you can do with your family. So I, when I got to that, I was like, Oh gosh, I'm so happy I stuck with this. So you might have to stick with this or you might just have to just skip to the end. But anyway, it's, it's the premise is compelling. The strategies are really important. So that's, that's really for us, for me it's like how do I ensure the children except me as their leader in the first place? [inaudible] and then once they do, once they're looking at you and saying, dad, you have my permission lead the way.

John Berardi:

[01:00:46](#)

You just lead through example and gentle correction, like the Halloween story, right? Is that a great choice for you right now? What could happen if you make this choice? What might happen if you make this choice? How would other people feel if you do this, you know, and you guide them to the right choice. The reason why, you know, I talk about working on patients and non authoritarian stuff is because this is how I want to be, but all my examples from life are the opposite from authoritarian leadership. You know, at what we might consider strong leadership. There's a person who knows and he's made up their mind and they have a purpose and they're going to tell you what's right. And it's like, yeah, but where does, well, I think we'd all argue are important. Independence, autonomy, uh, respect. Where does that come in?

John Berardi:

[01:01:39](#)

Right? It doesn't, there's not actually a lot of room for that. If someone's just making the rules and you've got to follow them. You know, even our notions of what good kids aren't bad, kids are sometimes have to change when we look at this differently. Right? Good kids are the kids who follow all the rules. Uh, I don't know if that's gonna put them on the path for the most successful, uh, empowered life. I agree with that. So how, if we believe that, then how do we back that all the way up to how we are with them? Yeah. You know what I mean? It's really easy to say, Hey, I want the school to be this way, but at home, you

know, they need to learn discipline. And so that's, that's my biggest challenge, uh, overriding all that code, uh, with some new code on.

John Berardi:

[01:02:25](#)

How to be with our children so that they want me to be their leader. And that that leadership is through compassionate questioning, guidance, support. You know, I think of it like this, you know, the, you wouldn't be upset with your three-year-old for not being able to successfully run a American Ninja warrior course. Right. But how could you get them to that, to doing that if that was their dream, right? Would it be yelling at them and being like, I need a new three year old, you know what I mean? No, it's support, caring, habit, practice, repetition. You know what I mean? So that, that goes with, I think the moral traits as well as the physical ones. Hmm. Now I don't know if I should title this show, the three year old Ninja warrior title. I love that.

John Berardi:

[01:03:24](#)

Uh, John, my, my last question man, and I'm, I'm going to take this in a totally different direction, but I really wanted to ask you this because we have some listeners that yes, this question really applies to their world and it's a very unique, I think we have a very diverse audience. In some ways we have, we have females that listen to this show. We have people that are just starting businesses that are listening to this show. We also have a lot of people really, I think [inaudible] businesses and Epic lives for themselves and they're in a different season right now. Yeah, we have, we have guys that are in their thirties that have built and sold companies and now, okay. Don't have to work ever again and sort of have, you know now created a life of design that they wanted, you know, they might live in the place in the home, all those things.

John Berardi:

[01:04:09](#)

My question to you is about do you ever have a concerns about raising kids [inaudible] too much wealth or opportunity and is that something you think about as you March forward in the years ahead because because of all the success that you've created in your life, is that a concern [inaudible] yeah, it's the number one question I ask of people who have accrued wealth sooner or more wealth than me or whatever the case may be. It's the number one thing I ask them because I'm always sampling. How other people think about this very question, who have to answer it practically pragmatically in your life. You know, there's a individual, some might know. Ray Daleo, who's one of the wealthiest people in the world, runs the world's largest hedge fund Bridgewater, and he's been a mentor to Phil and I over the years. There's a very cool story about how the book principles, which most people may know him from got made.

- John Berardi: [01:05:07](#) And that was actually my business partners doing Phil, uh, principles was a like PDF on the Bridgewater website. Like any company communication. And Phil stumbled upon it, found it, thought it was genius. And uh, Phil and I have tons of experience publishing, so he turned it into a beautiful book. He had it edited, he made, and he made two copies, one for himself and one for Ray. And so he somehow got it to Ray. And that wasn't a small story either. Uh, Ray loved it, called him. Phil is in Italy at the time and he said, I want to meet with you. Can I send my plane to Italy and bring you back to Connecticut? And I want to talk to you about this book thing. So that was like the impetus for getting the book off the ground. So that's basically the final version of principles is very close to the, the custom one Phil made as a gift to Ray for the wisdom and insight.
- John Berardi: [01:06:01](#) So Ray is someone who, you know, it's fascinating because I, you know, after selling the company, I have great deal of wealth. They don't have to work again. And it's always fun to throw your wealth in contrast to others and you're like, okay cool, I'm doing pretty good. But if I raise so wealthy that if I were to buy a house, he would have to buy 5,000 houses to just keep up his spending right with me. Okay. That guy's really rich. Right? And so he's someone I talked to about this, like what, how do you see this? You know, like providing your children, Ray didn't grow up with money. I grew up in an immigrant family, like, so I know the ethic that it required to get to this place in my life. And so Ray has a great answer for that, which is I want our children to have their healthcare and their education taken care of, and then everything else is up to them, right?
- John Berardi: [01:06:54](#) So he's part of the group of, you know, wealthy entrepreneurs and business leaders whose donating whatever the lion's share of their wealth to the Gates foundation when they pass. So Warren buffet, right? Daleo a host of other people. So that's where most of his money is going to go. You know, now still, if he donates 80% of his wealth and leaves the rest of his family, they're still going to be way richer than I am. So it's still a question, right? So I really like that answer, but I also think some of it has to do with the conversations that go along the way. You know, our kids are asking us this question now, right? Like daddy, the kids at school are saying we're rich. Is that true? You know? And so then it opens up marvelous opportunity to talk about what wealth means, like wealth in general, the connection between wealth and happiness, the connection between, uh, finances.
- John Berardi: [01:07:52](#) And material wealth. So these are all, you know, it's kind of like talking, you know, it's almost like in our network, uh, talking

about sex with children, right? Why do you talk about sex? Should we, it's the elephant in the room, right? So for us it's not though we talk about it, we talk about the biological basis of all this stuff. And so this is a similar conversation. When do you, you know, and sometimes I joke like, well honey, you're not wealthy. I am. But we talk about what that means. And, and also I think if you strip away or at least try and lay bare your own aspirations for your children and separate them from all the possibilities that could be for them, you know, when they get to choose, you'll see that some of your concerns are just your layering of your own aspirations over there.

John Berardi:

[01:08:45](#)

I was talking about, uh, our daughter's piano teacher today, uh, with my wife. And so she is awesome and she loves music and she comes from a wealthy family. And so her day job is, she works at a restaurant and she works minimal hours. And the rest of her time, she teaches children music and she participates in a bunch of choirs and plays music. So basically she is not striving in any of the ways that the entrepreneurs who might be listening are, her life is constructed in a totally different philosophical paradigm, right? She's like, I don't care if I make any money at music, but I love it and I'm just gonna do it and I'll make a little spending money from serving tables at a restaurant and she's in her forties so this isn't like a 20 year old. This is someone who this is how I'm going to govern my life.

John Berardi:

[01:09:39](#)

Right? And her parents have money and so she needs big things. They helped her with that. Right? And when they pass, she'll get some of that, right? So instead of squandering it and doing drugs and living a party lifestyle, which is what your assumption is, they're either going to be diligent and hardworking or they're going to squander it all, you know? Oh, there's all kinds of examples of something else. Right? So that's why I'm always on the lookout for them, you know? And then I'm always trying to say like, be careful not to superimpose all of your own worldview onto that of your four children who, uh, you want to pick, you want them to pick. Yeah. So that's how I think about that. And it's still a work in progress. You know, we only sold the company two years ago, now it's two years in December, so right around the corner.

John Berardi:

[01:10:28](#)

And so I think it's probably, this is going to be work in progress in my own mind for sure. Yeah. It's just something I think about a lot as a dad of, you know, when I grew up, I was really short. I was four 10 and weighed 85 pounds in my sophomore year of high school. Okay. And then I went to go see an endocrinologist and got HGH shots and grew like seven inches that year. Interesting. And I think about biology guy, that's so fascinating.

But keep going. This is where we put the interview. Right. You know, I think about how being short is one of the reasons that I feel very compassionate right now. And I have a lot of empathy right now in my life and why I fight for the underdog and how these challenges I faced in my life are oftentimes, you know, your pain becomes your purpose.

John Berardi:

[01:11:18](#)

And then I think about my kids and I think about, you know, I get they're going to naturally come up against challenges if they're just doing life, they're naturally going to come up with challenges. But I still can't help but wonder if the life that I'm providing for them is shielding them from some of the very things that help them get to where they need to be because of, okay, really, uh, going through the muck and yeah, I don't necessarily want to just shove them in the muck to force that upon them, but that's kind of what we do. And we do a tough Mudder literally and figuratively. Like, you know, it's like we challenge ourselves in that way to fortify ourselves. And I just wrestle with that a little bit about, you know, the thing I think about how terrible junior high was for me.

John Berardi:

[01:12:04](#)

And then I think about my kids and I'm like, I'm not going to send my son to a terrible junior high. I'm going to need their homeschool him or whatever. And I think, is that supporting him or is that actually like taking him out of the very muck that will strengthen him? Well, there's two things that come up for me when you say that. One is, that's my inclination to, you know, I grew up very poor and an immigrant family. Exactly. I grew up pre me, so I was super small growing up. Uh, I lost my first teeth when the school bully knocked them down my throat. You know what I mean? And, uh, so for me, that is part of what I often talk about, my backpack of grievances that I brought into my entrepreneurial life. All those things, not having money, people making fun of your shoes, people making fun of you for your small or just picking on you because you're small people telling you you can't do things as you get older.

John Berardi:

[01:12:56](#)

You know, I have, I, I put them all in this sack of grievances, imaginary sacred grievances. I would carry around with me and would use this fuel in my early professional life. Now that I'm kind of on the other side of that and the SAC has been put down, I realize that it was a kind of fuel that I used for sure to propel me to success. But it had a cost. Like it made me not a nice person to be around. You know? Even though I had compassion and empathy for the underdog, my elbows were out all the time. You know what I mean? I was throwing elbows, trying to make space for myself. Another person won't tell me that I'm can't do something. And also relationships went by the

wayside because if I felt like they would be a threat to me in any way accomplishing this thing, I had to prove to the world they would get knocked over too.

John Berardi:

[01:13:49](#)

You know what I mean? So there's a cost to that, right? So when you look at both sides of this, you're like, Oh wait, wait, wait. Okay. So, so I feel inclined. That's my first response to say, yeah, I feel the same way you do. And then I'm like, okay, but there's a whole set of assumptions built into that. Right. Also, the idea that I find it fascinating that if we strip all the pretense of modern life, you know, there's only a couple of things humans need to be doing on this planet, like staying alive, getting fed, having shelter. You know what I mean? Like that's, that's what it like, it's mostly about humanity on earth. Right? So this idea of like going for the apex of success, it's kind of a modern invention. Right, right. Um, and do I have to presuppose that it's required for our children, you know, that they have to climb some ladder to a kind of success.

John Berardi:

[01:14:48](#)

You know what I mean? Like I say it in my book, like for ambitious people, the summit of the mountain always gets higher, right? Like, cause as you get closer and closer, you're like, ah, but now there's more aspiration. Right. And I'm like, is this even a fundamental good if removing the threat of being eaten or starving, we're freezing to death, make our children comfortable, you know? Is that a negative? Right. You know what? I mean, like it may be for having a chip on your shoulder or enough of a chip to go out and try and be champion of the universe in business, you know? But is there an alternate path? Like, you know, the piano teacher I mentioned [inaudible] my parents made sure that I don't have to carry around grievances, that I don't have to strive so mightily and have to feel like I have to win things.

John Berardi:

[01:15:45](#)

You know, when financial games, you know, when impact, whatever it is. So now I just, I sit with young children who love music and I teach them and foster that love of music. It feels great. You know what I mean? And I'm not angsty about it. So that's my counterpoint to what you were saying and yeah, and I, and it's not an argument against yours, it's the internal debate I have constantly. Right. Uh, which is, uh, [inaudible] saw, able to expose your naked belly, like a dog who feels safe, a bad thing. Yeah. You know, that's a great point to end on, John. I think that was so well said and I, man, I just love, I loved every bit of this conversation, man. This is so great. Thank you again, John, for, for doing the hard work. You know, in the years leading up to this conversation because we all benefit from, you know, what's now been an hour and a half of just us.

- John Berardi: [01:16:44](#) This is all your moments, you know, this is all your discoveries. This is all the waking up and getting it done each day and learning and being what I think is a great blend of confidence and humility that you seem to possess and I really appreciate that. So thank you man. This has been awesome. Is there anything that needs to be said that hasn't been said, man, do you want to say anything to wrap us up? There's something on your heart that we need to communicate. The floor is yours for anything you want. Yeah, I mean, the thing that I leave with is, you know, presumably a lot of the people listening, I started tuning in and continue to tune in for a particular reason is that they have a certain striving in their lives to be better dad or parents are fine parent work balance or whatever, whatever you want to call it.
- John Berardi: [01:17:30](#) And um, you know, the thing that I often think about at which I learned from the health and fitness coaching side of things is that this path gets easier with compassion for yourself and your mistakes. It gets harder when we're hyper critical of the things we've done wrong. We see this in food and fitness all the time, right? Would you ever, if a friend said, Hey, you know, I've been following this diet lately, but last night I had some ice cream, I blew it. I'm going to quit. If a friend said that to you, you wouldn't be like, yeah, you should quit because you suck. You know? Uh, but that's what we say to ourselves, right? And we need some consistency there, right? You need to show up in that same way for ourselves. So as we strive to be better parents, as we strive to be better professionals, I think compassion can sometimes sound like weak and like giving yourself permission to screw up.
- John Berardi: [01:18:36](#) No, I don't think that's it. People don't thrive under high pressure and negative self talks, sock situations. They thrive when they are trying to do better. They're practicing doing better, they're investing in doing better. And then when they mess up, they have a very short memory about it. Yeah. I used to play football and that and I was a cornerback and that was what the best corners needed a short memory when they moved coverage and someone scored a touchdown pass over them or whatever, they stopped to play again in just a few minutes. And they have to be able to forget that that happens. And so that's the tension in the balance. How do I learn from my mistake? Yeah. Without beating myself up and forget it enough so that I can proceed with confidence moving forward. So that's what I think about. This is what I try and practice every day.
- John Berardi: [01:19:24](#) And I think everyone tuning in is probably striving to be better at some of the same things you and I are. So this is I think a how

you fertilize the soil for that. Yeah. So it's just, we probably already know this but it probably doesn't hurt to get a reminder. Oh man, a hundred percent John, thank you so much. I hope everybody continues to connect with you and follow the work that you're, you're producing for the world, including your book changemaker coming out December 3rd, right. That's when it's released. That's when the audio book is released. Yeah, the, the print book is out now. The Kindle versions out now on the audio releases in early December. It took a little longer cause I had to get all my friends and family into this. But yes, that's coming out soon. And then I'm working on other projects too. I've got three children's books that I'm working on.

John Berardi:

[01:20:12](#)

Uh, in 2020 that's going to be my next project for 2020 nice writing down. So next it's illustration and publication. And so that's a fun thing that I'm really excited about. And then, I don't know, beyond that, we'll see what do you, can we, can we have you back on the show to talk about the kids' books when they're out? Absolutely. That be super fun. I'd love to do that. That would be fun. I'm really excited about that conversation. Um, that's going to be wonderful. We'll put links in the show notes to everything we mentioned today, the book on DNA testing. Hold onto your kids everything else and including a link to your site, uh, at frontrowdads.com something else guys, that uh, if you're listening to the show for the first time, this is what I do as a thank you to my guests.

John Berardi:

[01:20:53](#)

And if you have been listening, you'll know exactly what I'm about to say next, which is if you write a review for this podcast, mention this episode, screenshot it, email it to [john@frontrowdads.com](mailto:john@frontrowdads.com). I will buy you a copy of changemaker and send it to you as a thank you for listening to the show and writing something nice about John Berardi. I'll send you a copy of his book. So cool. And so everyone also knows, I have a book, a copy of John's book here too, which is I have in the promotion of changemaker. I have a little thing going on where I do a podcast a day. So I am been on a lot of podcasts lately and it's closing in on 90. This is the first, this is the first time I got a note, a beautifully wrapped copy, a gift and, and a book from the author of the book.

John Berardi:

[01:21:44](#)

So that's above and beyond special John. So thank you for that. And thank you for the offer you're doing for the listeners too. Absolutely man. I'm such a huge fan of yours John, and I hope we continue to connect down the road and I'll be following along your journey man and, and I'm sending you all good vibes to you and your family. Sounds good. Same back to you. And uh, I'm excited to be on again. We can talk about the next phase of

what we're working on. Their doubt. Talk to you soon, John.  
Thank you.

Speaker 3:

[01:22:11](#)

Hey guys, if you haven't already done so, go right now to [front row dads.com/facebook](https://www.frontrowdads.com/facebook) and join the conversation that's happening right now on line. We designed this group for guys who are entrepreneurial in their thinking that are high performing guys with low egos. We're looking for the dads that believe in teaching their kids how to think, solve problems and be real leaders. We're looking for guys who believe in being family, men with businesses, not businessmen with families. We're looking for the fathers who have great knowledge but also believe that they have so much more to learn and we're looking for men who want to add value by sharing their wisdom and those that are willing to ask the questions that we all need and want answers to. That's [front row dads.com/facebook](https://www.frontrowdads.com/facebook) or simply go to Facebook, type in front row dads and you'll get to our group and what we put in there links to all the podcasts and videos and other resources that you can't get access anywhere else except for in this group. We want to give you the best ideas to help you with your marriage, balancing work and family life communication strategies with your spouse and also your children, travel ideas, and even suggestions on the latest gear that would save you time and help you be more effective. We've got updates on upcoming events and so much more. Go right now to [front row dads.com/facebook](https://www.frontrowdads.com/facebook) and join the conversation. I'll look forward to connecting with you there.  
[inaudible].