

Kava: Nature's Stress-Relieving Nootropic – Cameron George – #987

Dave Asprey:

Hey guys, I'm at the eighth Annual Biohacking Conference. This is my event that started 10 years ago at a tiny bar in San Francisco and has now blown up to thousands of people every year. And this gives me a chance to do podcasts in person, which makes me really happy.

I'm here with a kava expert and friend and founder of TRU KAVA, Cameron George. If you're a longtime listener, you've already heard us talk about the basics of kava. We're going to go deeper on this. We're going to talk about microdosing, we're going to talk about trauma, mental health and connections. And there's some really interesting research coming out. When you're thinking of the world of plant medicines, I want you to start including kava in the list of things that are psychoactive but not psychedelic that can have profound effects on how you feel, how you show up in the world, because the more I look into kava, the more interested I am. So, you're going to hear things you've never heard about kava, and you've never heard on the show before.

Cameron, thanks for being here in person sponsoring the episode and the conference and being an awesome entrepreneur. I really appreciate being an investor, advisor and just watching TRU KAVA get major grocery distribution.

Cameron George:

Yes. Yeah, we're super pumped. I am just always pinching myself. I'm so happy to be doing what I'm doing. I love this and I love being here at this conference. This is my favorite, so.

Dave:

How many doses of TRU KAVAV are you planning on giving out to people here?

Cameron:

Oh, it'll be thousands. Yeah, I mean it'll...

Dave:

It'll be thousands, all right.

Cameron:

Yeah, for sure. Yeah. We're well prepared for this event.

Dave:

So some listeners may not know what kava is. So to get everyone caught up, give me the real quick cliff notes on kava and then we're going to talk about why I would want there to be thousands of doses of it at the Biohacking Con.

Cameron:

Right. So very simply, kava is a stress-relieving nootropic. It's a natural elixir that's prepared from the roots of a plant that grows in the South Pacific called Piper methysticum, it means intoxicating pepper, it's in the Pepper family, and Indigenous people have used it for thousands of years and prepared this food grade drink kind of like coffee, but on the stress relieving side, on the nootropic side, but they've

prepared it and used it in almost every context imaginable, weddings, funerals, spiritual ceremonies, social gatherings. It helps to open up the opportunity for human connection, but it also helps to get people focused but yet relaxed and calm and in a very safe space neurologically.

Dave:

So we're talking about human connection. Sort of alcohol does this, but alcohol has all sorts of downsides and this activates similar receptors and others. I just realized it's a member the pepper family, but it's the black pepper family, not the green pepper family.

Cameron:

Right. Right.

Dave:

That's important because there are people like me who are nitrate sensitive, and for me, I love my green chilies and jalapenos, but if I eat them, the arthritis I've had since I was a kid comes back the next day.

Cameron:

Yeah.

Dave:

Kava doesn't do any of that stuff and I can drink kava and it doesn't do it.

Cameron:

Right. Yeah.

Dave:

In fact, my daughter is 15 and I took her to a kava bar for the first time she's ever been to any kind of bar. So we did a shot of kava and had a kava mocktail, which was pretty cool. And the idea there is that the idea of sharing beverages goes way back tribally, this is something that we would always do and there's no way any teenager should be drinking alcohol. Not that they don't want to, not that I didn't when I was a teenager, but just that we know what it does to teenage brains. It's just not worth it. There's other things you can do that make you feel the same way that aren't causing harm. How do you know that kava isn't causing harm?

Cameron:

When examining any new treatment or therapy modality or tool, it's always good to examine multiple types of evidence. I like looking at direct experience first. So whenever we look at kava's historical use, it's been used in islands in the South Pacific as a core part of the culture for over 3,000 years and when anthropologists have examined it over the last millennium, it's shown incredible safety and we've never seen virtually any long-term negative, deleterious effects, both on the body or the mind, whenever used in this historical context in its food grade form. In fact, the opposite has been shown anywhere where kava has been drunk and is a core part of Polynesian cultures, you see much higher markings in both mental and physical health across a wide variety of different parameters.

Dave:

But there've been toxicology studies on it, right?

Cameron:

Yes, absolutely.

Dave:

Okay. And some people who've been in the natural products industry for a while have probably heard people saying, "Well, kava actually is bad for the liver." What happened there and why is it not true?

Cameron:

It's always a really important thing to address right out of the gate because this is one of those quality control context issues. Kava has been drunk safely by South Pacific Islanders, like I mentioned, for over 3,000 years in its food-grade form when we prepare it with via water extraction and pressure, similar to how we prepare coffee and coffee is like a food, right? But straight caffeine powder is not a food, right? It's been extracted, concentrated, same thing with coca leaf, tea, which has been safely consumed for a long time versus cocaine. So in the early 2000s, there was one pharmaceutical company that tried to produce a synthetic kava isolate product and they used poor extraction methods with via solvents, but they also used incorrect parts of the plant that Indigenous Islanders have never used before.

Dave:

Oops.

Cameron:

Yeah. And we know this because Indigenous Islanders learn through direct experience, not through the scrutiny of the scientific lens. And over hundreds of years, they figured out that the aerial parts of the plant contain these plant defense systems, which we talk about a lot, that the plant uses to defend itself. But the roots, the underground portion of the plant that doesn't need to defend itself from pests, does not contain these in hardly any meaningful concentrations and doesn't contain the ones that are very egregious at all. So the Indigenous people have always prepared the kava drink exclusively from the roots and they use certain strains that are very tolerable.

Dave:

So with the right extraction, we have pretty good evidence that it's not toxic at normal doses.

Cameron:

Correct.

Dave:

Okay. And just, guys, keep in mind water is toxic at the wrong doses. So everything on the planet is, even meat is toxic at the wrong doses. You can drown in a vat full of meat. Don't try that at home. So what I would encourage you to think about is that if you're going to go intentionally intoxicate yourself to the point of feeling real social and all that, alcohol's probably a really bad choice. In fact, it's probably a bad choice. I think kava is always a better choice with not the drunken feeling, but the relaxed social connecting feeling. It's hard to put words to it, but it's really cool and it's one of the reasons I wanted to back TRU KAVA.

But the other thing is that you've gone into a lot of healing work, a lot of work around trauma and in this episode, now that we've sort of grounded people A, kava is safe when it's done right anyway and TRU KAVA, clearly you guys have very good lab testing stuff before I invested, I checked that out. The second thing though that I'm really interested in is around trauma healing. Because trauma, if you're new to the show, trauma isn't like you got in a car accident or something really egregious happened to you. It's pretty much anytime your nervous system didn't feel safe and it left a mark that your body automatically does something to. So there's lots of times when you just have this stuff and you're not going to know you have trauma. I had no idea I had any trauma until I was 30 and I would've made fun of anyone who said they had trauma when clearly nothing bad happened. So trauma's like bad programming is what it is. So what do we know about kava and trauma? Cause this was new to me.

Cameron:

This is really interesting and it's something that Indigenous Islanders have observed for the last few millennia and that now is being finally demonstrated and proven out whenever it's... when kava's been subjected to the scrutiny of the scientific lens. But the Indigenous people have always known, understood, talked about, even written about that kava improves mental and psychological health long term and that kava helps individuals get into a deep introspective state through which... it's a space through which higher integration takes place within the psyche, what we would call a left-right brain hemisphere interaction, but also takes people into a place through which they can more easily examine the landscape of their own internal framework and the aspects of their mind and of their psyche, which is something that we know psychedelics to do of course, but kava doesn't negatively affect your faculties at the same time.

Dave:

Okay, I've done most of the psychedelics out there at least once, and usually not more than once. And if you're listening going, "Oh, Dave says he is done psychedelics." Guys, I have many friends who decided psychedelics are going to make them enlightened and they've done them only 400 times, it's not working. So I have done psychedelics less than 25 times in my life and I do them usually ceremonially and with all sorts of energetic protections in place. So I'm not encouraging you to go just get high all the time and tell yourself it's going to make you a better person. I actually don't think that that works.

But Kava doesn't do that. And that's what I wanted to chat about with you. Cause I mean, I've taken it, I've taken enough to get real sleepy. I like to use it before bed, especially the oil that you guys make. But I've never had the "I'm seeing colors, my ego's dissolving, I'm going through a tunnel," none of the psychedelic stuff that oftentimes comes with a healing experience. How would you describe the way kava works on trauma? Is this more like an intellectual awareness of trauma? Tell me a little bit more here.

Cameron:

Well, it's both... and the Indigenous people have observed this and then we now are starting to see this both clinically where we've used it in hundreds, thousands of patients, but also in the scientific literature as well. So it appears to be working both on a psychological, emotional and a physiologic level. So basically it puts the mind in this higher perceptual state, left-right brain hemisphere, like hyper connectivity interaction to where you just are in a much more integrated frame of mind to where you can more easily have access to the reflective parts of your psyche to where you can just kind of examine things.

But it also lowers the limbic system at the same time through both the GABA pathway and it also is antagonistic towards cortisol and adrenaline and glutamate and all of those. And so what it appears to be doing is allowing you to get into a space where you can more safely reflect on your own internal circumstances from a place of limbic safety. Over time, you start to form new positive associations with both past and current events, which appears to be helping in having a neuroplastic effect that helps to create the opportunity to rewire the brain. But also at the same time, we see now in the scientific literature that whenever you consume traditional kava, like full spectrum kava on a regular basis-

Dave:

The way that you guys are making it?

Cameron:

Yes.

Dave:

Okay.

Cameron:

We see things like an uptick or an increase in GABA receptor density. So it appears to be having a physiologic effect where it's helping to rehabilitate and strengthen the parasympathetic nervous system, which allows your body to get into a rest and digest mode, also allows your body to get out of that sympathetic mode through which you're constantly looking at your past and current experiences through a fight or flight state perpetuating a cycle.

Dave:

If something bad happens a long time ago, it sets up an automated reaction in your body that happens before your brain even gets a signal. And when your brain gets a signal from that, it's going to go, "Oh God, it's end of the world." And it could be something as bad as someone saying the same thing that one of your parents said to you when they were really angry with you, and you're not going to consciously know this, you're not going to think about it, you're not going to decide. You're just going to get a feeling and the feeling is going to be unpleasant and you're going to look around and decide why that's happening. And it's probably whoever is around you or whatever's on the news, there's something and the trigger is going to be hidden by design. That's how your system works.

So what would happen though is if you had a trigger like that, but you had kava sitting inside of you and the kava's there saying, "Let's get less stress hormones, less cortisol," which is actually a good hormone when you have the right amount of it, "and let's get less of the fight or flight reaction," which means instead of flipping into reactive mode, you can actually sit there as an adult human being with a functioning brain and go, "Oh, weird. Look what my system's doing. I didn't realize that that was happening. What can I do to change that?" And the thing that I don't think you've talked about on the show before that's fascinating is the GABA receptor, GABA's an amino acid that's also a neurotransmitter, it's the calming one, and you want to take that before bed, except it doesn't really cross the blood brain barrier very well.

So some people actually have studies that show it doesn't at all, but I know many people who take it and it seems to work well. I like GABA and there's something called PharmaGABA I've used in supplements. But GABA receptors are the things that cause relaxation in alcohol, that's why it causes relaxation. So if

you can grow new receptors because you took kava, that's really interesting because then even when you're not using kava, you've just got more capacity to relax when you need to. That's kind of interesting.

Cameron:

Incredibly. And we actually see it play out clinically too in our patient population with hundreds of thousands of patients now where we see, and I saw it in myself too, because this is how I got into kava, I was incredibly traumatized, very sick, which we kind of went into the first time that we had the discussion, but I was one of these hypersensitive cases where I was having all these convulsatory reactions and seizures, and I noticed when I started taking kava regularly, I got this miraculous sort of uptick in my inhibitory systems, my body's ability to adapt to stress. And in kava, by identity, is a protective substance both in the natural ecology and through its chemical composition as well, too. Hits on every neuro and tissue protective pathway virtually that we know of. So it appears to be acting as this protective substance that increases a human's adaptability to stress and creating the space in which your body can process stress.

Dave:

Would you call it an adaptogen?

Cameron:

I would, but it's not a classic adaptogen like a ginseng or a reishi, because those are substances that are just more sort of middle of the road, very subtle, that just kind of help the systems in your body very subtly adapt over time. Kava actually has a strong affinity for strengthening the parasympathetic nervous system and giving you an instantaneous inhibitory effect at the same time. So kava is both a strong acute medicine but also a tonic medicine as well, as where ginseng's more of a tonic medicine, you don't really feel that much when you're taking it, but kava acts almost... it feels a lot like alcohol, but without the drunkenness whenever you take it. So it's like a calm, enhanced state of natural sobriety. So it allows you to get that acute relief that you would get out of a pharmaceutical, but without the side effects of the pharmaceutical, but also works underneath the hood at the same time. It's almost like a car jack and the mechanic that's working on the engine at the same time. It's really interesting.

Dave:

So do people take it in the morning?

Cameron:

Certain strains, yes. We have a product KAVAPLEX MIND that is a Tongan strain that has a kavalactone composition, those are the active constituents, that favor more of the dopaminergic effect and less of the inhibitory effect. It still is calm, but it doesn't put you to sleep or it doesn't calm you down too much and it has more of a nootropic effect, but without the jitters. So people combined it with coffee, sometimes take the edge off of coffee if you're sensitive to stimulants, but it can definitely be taken in the morning.

Dave:

I'm definitely an evening type, but I haven't played much with your Tongan things in the morning. I don't need to be more relaxed during the day. I like having the energy on. So for me it's like evening. I love the

KAVAPLEX oil that you make, but I'll try the Tonga in the morning, but probably not during the conference just in case.

Cameron:

Okay.

Dave:

Does it work well with modafinil?

Cameron:

For me... I mean, everything is different for everybody. I mean, it's always a host substance or host stimulus interaction. It's like X plus Y equals Z host plus given substance equals the effect. For me, I like it better than modafinil just because whenever I was sick, I got so sensitive that pharmaceuticals were just overkill for me and I get so stimulated and I'm still, even today, even though I'm far more adaptable, I'm still a little bit sensitive to stimulants after being sick for so many years. So for me, kava has that perfect... It just feels so natural. You can take it long term and it gives you that calm sort of centered focus. So I like it. It's my favorite nootropic. But other people may respond more powerfully to modafinil, but definitely would take it over any of the other pharmaceuticals, Adderall or any of those.

Dave:

Adderall I don't think is just good for you in any way. It's bad stuff.

Cameron:

Yeah.

Dave:

Okay. You've compared kava to microdosing and people typically microdose either psychedelic mushrooms or LSD, and there's a bunch of benefits of doing that, there's other compounds that'll probably do the same thing though that maybe aren't going to be breaking laws wherever you live. Tell me about what you know with kava versus microdosing.

Tell me about what you know with kava versus microdosing.

Cameron:

Yeah. So if you read the anthropological accounts, historically, the state of mind that kava puts you in and now what we know from the science about the left-right brain hemisphere interaction and all of that, the reflective introspective state it takes you in, that state, that more cognitively flexible state where you can kind of zoom out of your perceptual space and see your life in all of its pieces like it's laid out on the table, allows you to engage in higher systems thinking. So where you can see your body and your life and your circumstances as a system, kind of like people are trying to get with microdosing.

Dave:

But that's not what microdosing does, I didn't think. Microdosing enhances cognition and it increases neuroplasticity for the most part, but that ability to step out, that's usually from taking a quarter dose or above. But typical microdosing is 5% of a dose. It's very subtle.

Cameron:

Well, usually, yes, and what you're trying to get from microdosing is you're trying to not have it be in the foreground. It'd be like those effects, but in the very background where it's very subtle to where people a lot of times don't even realize that that's happening. But if you watch someone's behavior and a lot of people that are trying to perform better, they like microdosing even with the tryptamines like LSD and psilocybin as a performance enhancer to where they can show up, they can see everything more clearly, not in the sledgehammer way that taking a macro dose will, but that's kind of like what kava does in mild to moderate dosages as well, it runs in the background. In higher dosages, it's even more prominent, but it runs in the background. And that's the thing because I called it a common enhanced state of natural sobriety. You don't want to be knocked off your center when you're taking something long term.

But the idea is that it takes you into an integrative state of mind and a state of mind where it lowers limbic system, even more powerfully it appears than a lot of the stronger psychedelics because of the GABA pathway interaction is where the substances like psilocybin and LSD are tryptamines, they work on the serotonin system primarily, but kava works mainly through the GABA system, also serotonin, also dopamine. It has this very just balanced, really good kind of food grade framework to where it's like if the stronger psychedelics, the classic ones, are sort of shout a message at you in high dosages and at lower dosages they definitely do it a little bit less, kava like whispers it. And it allows you to get into this state of mind that's very similar to these really small doses of the classic psychedelics, but has more of an affinity towards lowering the limbic system and rehabilitating it and in the calm, relaxed state of mind that people are looking for. But yeah.

Dave:

What about brain derived neurotrophic factor, BDNF, and I got to define that for listeners. Most of the book that I wrote about cognitive enhancement, called Headstrong, was either about raising BDNF because it increases neuroplasticity like a young brain so you can transform yourself, including healing trauma, or it was about increasing mitochondrial energy. If you can just raise those two things, you're like "I have full power and full plasticity." Look, you're like clay in there. What does kava do on either one of those fronts?

Cameron:

I mean this is something I've been really, really interested in because just like you, I mean had neurotrauma and those were the two main factors for me and I knew that, that's why psychedelics helped me at one point, that's why mitochondrial enhancers did and why detox did, stem cells, all that stuff. But with kava, we don't have any direct studies yet that have shown increases in NGF or BDNF, however, it's been proposed for a very long time at the botanical community that it's having an indirect effect. And we can derive that mainly because whenever we look at people clinically, if you can lower all of the inflammatory parameters in the brain and if you can increase a person's ability to get deep in REM sleep in much higher amounts, which we see that clinically all the time via aura rings and everything, and we see that in the studies, people start recovering better, they get into a place in which they can recover.

When you strengthen the parasympathetic nervous system, it's rest and digest. So you're digesting, you're assimilating food better over time, you're getting deeper sleep and also you're lowering inflammation in the neurological system, creating the opportunity for neurological recovery to happen. So I would say, if you were to ask me, even though we don't have any direct studies showing a direct

increase immediately, I would say... if I were to guess, I would say that it is happening and I would say it's happening probably directly and indirectly. Definitely indirectly.

Dave:

So then what I would do with kava, actually what I do do, is I would take BDNF enhancers with it. And so this is things like liquid alcohol and heat extracted lions mane, ideally from Australia, the Life Cykel stuff is the one that I found works best, because then if... you imagine this, you're enhancing the number of GABA receptors that you have, you're activating your GA receptors, which is the relaxing one. At the same time, you're getting your brain to be more neuroplastic. So that means, oh, here's the relaxed state, here's the ability to learn the relaxed state and you enhance that. And there's a bunch of stuff that does this besides lion's mane. And if you're using kava for trauma resolution specifically, you're saying, "Okay," maybe even you go to a therapist or you do holotropic breathing and now you've got this extra ability to be neuroplastic and to have more calm receptors than we had before. Do you know what kava does to dopamine?

Cameron:

Yeah. It's very interesting because kava definitely has a prominent effect, certain strains more than others, like we talked about with the Tonga strains, so it works as a monoamine oxidase B inhibitor that's reversible and it substantially, especially in high dosages, increases synaptic levels of dopamine, which definitely makes it viable as nootropic. It also makes it viable just for social interaction, social lubrication, all of those things that we see with substances that increase dopamine, except it's not addictive, which is really interesting. And that's plant pharmacology. It doesn't create that loop that depletes dopamine, that leaves you chasing it the next day, borrowing from tomorrow to pay for today, charging on credit type of thing. It creates this effect where it's able to naturally support and raise dopamine levels in the brain.

Dave:

So reversible MAOB inhibitors are classical antidepressants because they increase dopamine. And from a natural perspective, if you've ever tried something called mucuna pruriens, which is a type of... actually it comes from a bean, believe it or not. And that's one of the ways we know you can increase dopamine, which makes you feel better. It was originally researched on Parkinson's people, believe it or not, because they have low dopamine. So that's one way that's recognized. There's also something called L-deprenyl, which is a very, very old antidepressant, which is also an MAOB inhibitor and a profound antiaging substance at low doses because it has exactly the same effect as kava.

So if you want your brain to last a long time, you take one or two drops, it's a microdose of that stuff, and what it does is it protects the dopamine neurons or dopamine receptors, not neurons in the brain. And I would propose, given the effect you're just describing from kava, that it likely has a similar effect from an antiaging perspective. Anytime you can have young dopamine receptors, you have a zest for life. One of the things I talk about a lot on the show, especially on the intervention episodes, is people have low thyroid function, which means they have less energy, like "I'm so tired." And then they have low testosterone, about 45% lower in men and also lower in women than we had 40 or 50 years ago. So you're like, "Wow, that's bad." And that's the hormone of desire. So I have no energy, I have no desire. But if you have no dopamine or your dopamine receptors aren't working, that's related to desire, but it's almost like no reward for achieving desire. So if you want to be at full power and just have your meat hardware working the right way, you've got to have enough energy, you got to have enough desire and you've got to have enough dopamine activity. And I think that's pretty interesting about kava. So you

take it, you're relaxed, your ability to just chill goes up and it goes up permanently as you grow new receptors. But then your ability to achieve reward and to feel good about what you did also goes up because of the dopamine effect. That's why it's a really interesting substance.

Cameron:

It's very valuable today because we live an environment where we're constantly stimulated from every angle with social media, foods, things that are like dopamine releasers and a lot of people are really depleted in their dopamine because they're being over-stimulated and they're not going into recovery state and finding ways to restore it and protecting your dopamine or protecting your neurochemistry, but definitely through the dopamine centers, is important.

Dave:

So how frequently should I masturbate?

Cameron:

I would cycle everything.

Dave:

That's a new answer. I was trying to see if I could get... Oh, I made you blush a little bit, didn't I. So how frequently do you... No, no, I'm just kidding. I'm not going to go there. But when we have excessive reward there, I'm talking about porn as a primary source of draining dopamine, of course social media likes and there's just all this stuff that's built into the world that does it these days. Are you saying though, that when you have kava, you are less likely to fall into those things? Or just that we have those things and kava is strengthening?

Cameron:

I would say the research is pretty strong to show that if you can naturally replete and prop up your dopamine levels, obviously it's going to lead to less depletion, less desire to chase, to try to compensate for the dopamine that you don't have, which is really the perpetuation cycle of addiction. It's like we're borrowing from tomorrow's stores to pay for today, which puts you in debt, which leads you seeking even more because you feel uneasy and you're caught in this negative feedback loop. And if you can find strategies, therapies, substances, like kava, that can actually help to restore and replete and raise those to satiate you without spending, without overspending, raising naturally and repleting not depleting. Like amphetamine, Adderall or cocaine depletes. That's why you take it and you can function super great and it's not giving you more dopamine, it's using it up.

Dave:

It's basically dumping all your dopamine all at once. Yes. But then that feeling of exhaustion that you get.

Cameron:

The next day. Yeah.

Dave:

And just for the record, I say that feeling of exhaustion, cocaine is not a drug that I think you should microdose or experiment with at all. It's provably bad and there's so many other ways to get energy. It's just like alcohol, coke and alcohol, the tradeoff isn't worth it because there are better ways. With alcohol, I think kava's the clear replacement for it. And from a cocaine perspective, you want a burst of energy, my God, there's all sorts of different ways to get it that are safer, including, and I'm going to say Adderall, which is not a good thing at all, but it's still better than coke because of the dopamine effects and you shouldn't use it regularly.

And then there's other less abused substances that will make you feel perfectly energized at a party. And that can include modafinil and it can include caffeine and a bunch of other things I'm not going to go into. But bottom line is, if you're feeling so tired like you need a bump of coke in order to go out and dance at Burning Man, no, you probably don't need a bump of coke. There's just so many ways. What you probably need is a shot of kava and possibly even some cortisol. There's just safer ways to do it and feel relaxed and want to-

Cameron:

And long term, a multi-therapeutic approach. That's how I got my life back in order to restore and increase your body's ability to create and maintain healthy neurochemistry. So you want a pro-health approach instead of constantly trying to just borrow from tomorrow to pay for today. It's like if you're running on empty, you've got to soup up the engine, you got to make yourself more efficient, put more fuel in.

Dave:

Yeah. I agree. Sometimes you just have to eat. Seriously, you could just be hungry.

Cameron:

Yeah.

Dave:

Now, going up against big alcohol is a terrible strategy, I'll just have to say it, because people like to drink. And I'll tell you, if you like to drink for more than a decade, I've published for free an infographic that tells you here's how to minimize the harm from it. I am on Dr. Daniel Amen's, board of directors for Amen Clinics, which is a big honor because he helped me see what toxins had done to my brain, specifically mold toxins many years ago and helped me recover. So he's on Instagram every day talking about "alcohol's bad, alcohol's bad, alcohol's bad." And the evidence is just overwhelming. But people like to do it. Now, it's a bad strategy, except going up against big food and big junk food seemed to be a good strategy for me with Bulletproof because it was the right thing to do.

So with TRU KAVA, in order to make it something that's accessible, it's not an anti-alcohol thing. You can drink if you want to, if you tried doing kava, even if you're drinking kava and your friend's having a beer, if you have a can of carbonated stuff that feels good and tastes good and gives you a similar but different effect and the next morning you're awesome and your friend is wrecked, I think it's going to catch on because it's actually better, right?

Cameron:

Yes.

Dave:

And so I just want, if you're listening to this, I want you to know this is not an anti-alcohol thing. This is a it's actually a better way of doing it. And similarly, just as an entrepreneur, I have... I remember when I opened what was then called the Bulletproof Cafe, now it's called the Upgrade Cafe in Santa Monica, and we have coffee of butter and all that stuff. Across the street, Gunpowder Tea opened. Okay, Bulletproof and Gunpowder, that's funny, right? But they had a big sign up front that said "No coffee here." And I'm like, "Those poor guys." And of course 90% of people drink coffee. So they went, some of my coffee shop, Gunpowder closed. I think they still have a on the shelf product perhaps, and good luck guys. But you can't do that, it's bad. No. What we're saying here is that you could even have alcohol and kava at the same time, right?

Cameron:

Yeah you can. If it's food grade kava you can.

Dave:

Well, yeah. Well, you want to have TRU KAVA, right?

Cameron:

Yes.

Dave:

So what I've been working with you on is getting big distribution because if it's hard to find kava and you wanted... Okay, I wanted to have a TRU KAVA, but it's just not anywhere I could get it. I had to order it online or something. I had to really plan ahead. A lot of people don't plan ahead when they're going to go out and party. So what you did, and what we've been working on, is getting grocery distribution. So you could just go buy it the same way you'd buy a six pack of something, but now when you drink it, like I'm doing a plant medicine that has benefits instead of a plant toxin that doesn't really have any benefits, which is alcohol.

Cameron:

Correct.

Dave:

Okay. Can you talk about that? Is that news?

Cameron:

Yes, it is.

Cameron:

Yeah, we are going to be launching mass retail in one big chain, I don't-

Dave:

You can't say who they are?

Cameron:

Yeah.

Dave:

Okay.

Cameron:

Well-

Dave:

I know who they are, but I'm not going to drop the news.

Cameron:

I mean, most of you can probably derive who they are, but yeah, so I mean, we're going to be launching into-

Dave:

A large natural products grocer.

Cameron:

Yes, yes.

Dave:

The largest one.

Cameron:

Yes, exactly. This next year and we have conversations with several of the other subsidiary ones as well. And we have a model lined out to where we can saturate natural grocery and then move into conventional grocery with either a similar product line or one that is more for mass marketability. But that's been our plan since the beginning is to integrate kava into every layer of the infrastructure in a high quality form that makes sense and that we can eventually make kava as common as a kombucha or hopefully even one day as common as a cup of coffee because-

Dave:

Good luck with that.

Cameron:

That's the goal. That's what we're shooting for. We're going to swing for the fences on that one. But yes, I mean, it's one of those things that if you go to the South Pacific, they drink kava more than they do any other substance. It's a core part of their culture like alcohol or coffee is here. And we see it just improve the culture, increase communities, increase human connectivity, the social interaction, health parameters. It doesn't do what alcohol does in many cases. But again, like you said, we're not anti-alcohol. We're just pro-efficiency and we're pro a good substance. We're pro kava, right? Because Kava helped me a lot and what I've noticed and what we see clinically and what we see in hundreds or

thousands of individuals is the more people use a substance like kava that's as efficient, they start to lose their taste for alcohol. And so maybe they're using kava 80% of the time, say during the week, and then maybe on the weekend they have an extra glass of wine or something whenever they're out with their friends that are only doing that.

But it is just one of those things that I think people notice efficiency and they notice ROI over a long period of time. They notice that they feel better. And if you drink something that gives you the same effect that you're looking for without the drawbacks and doesn't elicit any hangover, the next day, people migrate towards it. The South Pacific Islanders prefer alcohol... or sorry, prefer kava to alcohol. In fact, in Vanuatu, which is an island chain right off the coast of Fiji, and in Fiji, there are 20 times as many kava bars as there are regular bars because they prefer the substance. They've had it for thousands of years.

Dave:

That is so super cool. Just as an entrepreneur, one of the functions of The Human Upgrade, of my show, is to find the newest and the latest stuff and make everyone know about it. And it's also to create change. And I believe entrepreneurs create change more so than just about anyone else. Going out and complaining about something, "Alcohol's bad for you." Okay. That would be one step, but probably not a beneficial step. That's the victim mindset step. The better thing to do is to say, "Here's a way to do it better," and then you have to go build it. And that's what you've done. And so I'm super happy to be able to be helping you and just watching you go on that. You are a true believer. It made a difference for you. You can't get clean and reliable, consistent kava right now, except with TRU KAVA, so you went out and you said, "I'll do it for myself."

It's very similar to what I did with clean coffee and all of those things because well shoot, someone's got to do it. So thank you for being the guy who does it instead of the guy who complains about how bad things are, because things are actually pretty good when you go out and you do something. So I'm encouraging everyone listening, go solve a problem. I don't want to hear about the problem. I want you to fix it. And then come on the show and tell everyone how you're fixing it and how your way is better and provably better and easy enough and affordable enough that people will actually do it. And I mean, you're now at grocery stores and this is actually how you change the world. You make a product that people want that accessible to them that actually works. What they taught me in business school at Wharton was it's cheaper to spend money telling people that your stuff works than it is to actually make a quality product. I reject that. I do not believe that, and I know that you don't believe that either.

And so TRU KAVA, there you go, it's actually real. And if you're listening to this, you're not at the conference where you're going to get to try some, it's TRU KAVA, T-R-U K-A-V-A.com. Use code Dave 15, they'll give you 15% off. And I'm serious, try this. Try TRU KAVA and try it from a month. You can try it at bedtime. You can try it whenever it works. And what you're going to find is that you actually can feel better over time and you'll feel chill when you do it. I would say don't do it before a big meeting until you know what it does because it could be really relaxing. You don't want to be too relaxed, you don't want to be too ampy. And you have different strains on the website that can actually dial in more, energy versus more relaxation. For me, it's like an evening beverage. But I'm going to try the Tongan variety that you have and see if that cranks me up even more during the day.

So Cameron, thanks man. This is fascinating. I think the trauma resolution parts of kava are something no one's talked about. More GABA receptors and not depleting your dopamine at the same time is super legit.

Cameron:

Since the beginning we've been interested in the bigger picture of if I'm creating something... I've been sick, I've been on my last leg and I was able to make it back. I've been blessed with that. So in everything that I do from an entrepreneurial standpoint, I want to create the highest value as possible and I want to focus on solving real problems to real issues. I'm not interested in just turning over profit, even though that's part of being in business and everything. But this big issue obviously of drugs, alcohol, addiction, that's all that stems from trauma, we have something here that is part of a big answer that whenever injected into cultures, we see it reform or help make a positive contribution to the social structure because these psychoactive states of mind through substances are the medium through which most of us connect. That's what alcohol is.

Most people are drawn towards alcohol because it helps them connect with other people. But you get all these negative effects with it. And a lot of times in high dose you're not totally yourself. And kava is just, in our view, a better, more efficient way of doing things. And I think it has some substantial cultural impact. Just like coffee has helped to, in the early 1900s, shape the productivity structure of the culture, the intervention of coffee breaks and everything that increases productivity and puts us in a certain state of mind. So the quality of the altered states we engage in in our social structure environments helps to shape who we are as a culture. So I think that the substances and practices that we uphold create a direct reflection of our mentality. So we're very excited about it.

Dave:

Does TRU KAVA work with social anxiety, so if someone's freaked out about that stuff?

Cameron:

Absolutely it does. I mean, everybody has to try it. The results are always individual, just like with anything, but consistently, that's one of the main things that kava does really help with is it helps people, especially who are socially anxious, to get into that state where it lowers their limbic system activity. It's like people who take beta blockers before doing public speaking and stuff, kava has those mechanisms, it has those antagonistic effects on beta adrenaline receptors and everything, but also the GABA system. But it does, it helps people get in that state where they can open up and connect with people and be focused and be empathetic, too.

Dave:

So people with problems public speaking from anxiety could possibly use TRU KAVA before they go on stage and see if it makes a difference?

Cameron:

I do.

Dave:

You do?

Cameron:

Yes. Yes.

Dave:

So did you drink it before you come on the show?

Cameron:

I always do. I always take it in some form, even if it's smaller dose, large dose, depending on what I'm doing. But I'm always using it, even whenever I want just a little bit. Sometimes I'll even rub some of the oil of my skin and you can get a little bit of effect that way. So you have to tailor it to your specific needs. But it's definitely very, very effective for any type of community or social engagement. And it's been shown to increase empathy as well, too, so it helps people just get zoned into a conversation, open up and connect. In fact, that's why kava bar atmospheres, in the islands, that's why they like kava better because they find that the atmosphere that it creates when a lot of people are doing it is an open, inviting, very connected atmosphere. You'll never see a fight break out at a kava bar. I've never seen it. It's great for getting people to connect and lowering their stress association to a fear as well, too, so like public speaking.

Dave:

Got it. So public speaking, social anxiety, asking someone out on a date, if you're still nervous about that. And seriously, I'm just going to call you out here if you're listening to this, if you have social anxiety, you need to deal with your trauma. If you're afraid to ask someone out on a date because they might reject you, you need to deal with your trauma around rejection. And if you have a fear of public speaking, you could block your adrenal responses or you could go in and hack your programming so that you don't get an adrenal response in the first place, which is just much less work. What I'm proposing here, what Cameron is proposing, is that if you were to use TRU KAVA over time, the effects on GABA receptors might help with that. And at the same time, do some trauma resolution work.

That's what I do at 40 Years of Zen. That's what you can do with EMDR, with holotropic breathing and with a good therapist. So pairing that with something that increases your ability to make the kind of receptors you want is a good deal. Cameron, thanks for sharing all this information. I love the idea of stacking TRU KAVA with trauma resolution techniques so people can drop the anxiety. There's no reason that you shouldn't be able to go on stage in front of an infinitely large number of people and just be like, "I'm me, and if you don't like me, screw off." That's a calm... that's a dangerous person. It's like, "You know what? I'm not going to worry about what others are thinking, I'm going to do the right thing. I'm going to share what I have to say. And I'm going to ask this person out and if they don't recognize how awesome I am, well, then too bad, I'll ask someone else out." And you can do it over and over until you get a date. It's not that hard, except it feels hard.

So if you can do the trauma resolution and you're using TRU KAVA as an amplifier of your ability to just chill the F out when your body doesn't want you to, I think there's great merit in that. And if you're a young person dealing with this, like every young person throughout every generation has always dealt with, trust me, everyone who's 15 or 19 gets sweaty palms when they think about all that kind of stuff. It's biologically normal. It's also a waste of time. So do the work, face the fear and maybe face it a little bit faster with something like TRU KAVA. I think there's just great merit to it, that's why I'm helping you, and I know you're doing it. You're all in. You're a true believer, which is what makes the best entrepreneurs.

And you already heard this, but in case you didn't write it down, T-R-U K-A-V-A.com. Use code Dave 15 and they've got bundles where you can try all the different varieties and flavors and things like that. This is really legit and you will save money versus buying tequila, I promise, trukava.com.

Guys, thanks for listening. I hope you learned some new things about kava. This is a place where you are going to find about things that are happening before everyone else, and that's what I've done. The whole nootropic thing, the whole... let's see, intermittent fasting. That was in 2010, 2011 I started

writing about it. The cyclical clean keto, phytic acid, oxalic acid, lectins are all something you would've heard about from following me very, very early on. Red light therapy, sleep hacking, all that stuff.

Kava is on my list of what's happening in the future, but it's happening here first and now, it's happening at the Biohacking Conference. So continue listening. I'm going to do my best to tell you the stuff that's going to matter greatly in a couple years, but you're going to hear about here so you can look at all our friends and be like, "Ha, told you so." See you all soon.