

Mike Roesslein:

The next episode of Rebel Health Spotlight. I'm your host, Michael. I am here today with our friend Steve Wright. Steve, thanks for being here.

Steve Wright:

Thanks for having me back, Michael.

Mike Roesslein:

Yeah, it's always fun to connect. I also enjoy these less formal conversations quite a bit. So you were near the top of the list of people when we knew we were going to start this new series. I wanted you to come on and talk about who you are and what you're doing. People that have been on our list for a while in our audience, they have seen you on webinars going back a few years, but to anybody who's new, they might not have. They may just see some things on our site or in our shop, Healthy Gut, and Steve's the founder of Healthy Gut, but he also has been through his own experience a little bit that led him to doing that. So I just want to introduce Steve to you guys, his story a little, what he's doing. We really like the products he's created and the company he's launched. And he has been through the ringer himself with confusing and challenging gut and digestive symptoms, so he'll have some good little tidbits to share with you too. So I guess we'll start with your own story and background a little bit in an abbreviated, because I think we could go about an hour on that. So how'd you get from being ... You were an engineer, yeah?

Steve Wright:

Yeah, yeah. I received electrical engineering degree in college.

Mike Roesslein:

Okay. I also received a degree in college that I am not doing the thing for. So high five.

Steve Wright:

Yeah.

Mike Roesslein:

So how'd you get from an electrical engineering degree to founder of a professional gut supplement company?

Steve Wright:

Well, when I graduated college, I went to college in Flint, Michigan, at Kettering University, and that's in the ghetto and there's nothing to really do except for study 20 credit hour terms and drink a lot. And so not having a ton of money, was a lot of pizza and beer and studying and stress. And so I was like 240, 245 when I graduated. I'd always been into supplements for brain and performance. And so when I graduated, I was also in a fraternity, which is where I met Jordan, who we later co-founded SCD Lifestyle together. I realized that my digestive issues were not just normal and funny, they were abnormal versus 50 other guys, and I was the stinky guy. I had to spend hours in the bathroom every morning before class started. Accidents here and there. And so when I got out of college, I was like, okay, well now I have time to be an adult trying to lose this weight.

And so I thought I could just eat chicken and salad and work out for an hour, hour and a half a day and peel off the weight. That didn't really work. I got down like 10 pounds, but just kind of plateaued and that was frustrating. So I was digging into why am I stuck? Why am I overweight? When Jordan was essentially dying from celiac disease, even though he was on a gluten-free diet and he was doing it to a tee. He replaced his countertops and his pots and pans, he was so maniacal about trying to avoid any gluten. I never heard of anybody still to this day that took gluten more serious than him because he literally was so malnourished, he was dying. And so he got help. He got introduced to something called the Specific Carbohydrate Diet that started in the '20s, was popularized more in the '40s and '50s, and then in the '90s with Elaine Gottschall's book *Breaking The Vicious Cycle*.

That change in diet stopped his diarrhea, started his healing trajectory. Meanwhile, I was still doing intermittent fasting. This is like 2007, 2008. So I'm doing intermittent fasting. I'm finally losing the weight, but I'm also starting to have panic attacks, deep depression. I have gas after every meal at this point. Every meal, it doesn't matter if it's salad and chicken or beer and burger, I am farting. And basically get called into my boss's office and he's like, look, if you don't stop farting and get this taken care of, we're going to have to talk about your role at the company. And so that took something that was really embarrassing and frustrating and accidents on buses and all kinds of missing dates and up all night style stuff to like, wow, it's going to take away my livelihood.

So Jordan is on his track, I'm on my track. I go seek help from Western medicine. I just find out that I have a family history of IBS, which is like, no duh. I don't have the genes for celiac disease so they suggest I use Metamucil and whole grains to alleviate my issues. And so he's getting this help. I'm having my issues. He tells me. And then at that point in time, we were so frustrated with our work and everything that we decided to start a new company. And so we started this blog SCD Lifestyle where we tried to make it a lot easier to adopt a specific carbohydrate diet, which is kind of like a low FODMAP diet. It's kind of faded away. Every five years someone comes out with a new diet because cookbooks and authors and things like that, and the research moves forward.

But at the time, all there was was listservs and really crappy blogs. So we wrote an ebook. We started trying to teach people about this diet because it really took away my gas in seven days or 50% of it. And that was just a light bulb moment for both of us around, hey, maybe we could help other people like us. So we have a lot of anger and rage towards Western medicine, towards this life that we didn't really know that we had signed up for. We could put that to good use. Hopefully we can find some financial independence and make the world a better place. And so that was kind of like the journey, but that would spiral into Kalish Institute, functional medicine because it turned out just dietary change doesn't heal anything. I mean it does, but it doesn't. It fixes and it's supportive, but it didn't reverse my anxiety, depression. It didn't fix all my GI issues. It didn't fix all his GI issues. It turned out there was some parasites and hormone disruption and nervous system issues and a laundry list of things that we can dive into if you want.

Mike Roesslein:

No, that's good. And I like how you mentioned the diets will help, and they often don't get to the root cause. It's something Kiran has talked about quite a bit. They made a product at Microbiome Labs called FODMATE, which is a digestive enzyme specific to FODMAPs. And then people on the first time we ever did a webinar with him were like, cool, I can just eat this thing now. And he's like, well, the reason we made this is because if you go on a FODMAP free diet or an SED diet, which does have stages to it where you gradually reintroduce things, but if you go on a hyper restrictive diet, it's going to help your symptoms that you have right then probably if it's the right diet for your situation, but then you're going to become deficient in certain things. You're not going to have diversity in the diet to help the

microbiome, which helps heal the thing in the first place. So it's almost like appeasing the bully in a way, which, I mean, dude, if you're going to lose your job because your gas, appeasing the bully is awesome for a minute or insert other really life changing symptoms, it's great to do that.

But then yeah, you mentioned the Kalish Institute. Dan Kalish has trained ... I mean, he's the OG in functional medicine. He was training practitioners probably before anyone else that I knew of. And then you guys. SCD Lifestyle was huge. I don't know what was your peak number of audience or subscribers or whatever over there, but it was a couple hundred thousand people, wasn't it?

Steve Wright:

Yeah. I think the email list got to about 350,000. We had about a million a month coming to the blog at the peak.

Mike Roesslein:

Yeah, that's how I found you guys. And I used that quite a bit with clients. That was right around when I was starting to work with clients with GI issues. And that was a starting point I used for a lot of them. And then you moved on a little bit. I know you had the cool project, we did a webinar on it where you researched all those interesting off the beaten path remedies and supplements.

Steve Wright:

Yeah. Well, I mean, I think there's things that make me different from other influencers, experts, doctors, medical professionals or health professionals out there. I'm not like Ben Greenfield or Dave Asbury. I don't have their wiring, their discipline wiring or whatever it is. I'm not going to sacrifice pleasure and fun for an extra ounce or two of optimal health. I'm more of a hedonist. So my journey is I have this engineering influence, which makes me look at the world in this totally different way. I want the least risk, highest reward all the time. And then everything I look at is a system of systems. They're all connected. So if you ever talk to an electrical engineer, we over complicate things because in schooling we can't touch it or otherwise we get electrocuted. So we have to make up these fantasies and solve these problems where you can't really touch and feel things. You have to figure out how it's all connected. And if you poke something over here, it's going to change things over here. And so I see everything through the systems lens and then this risk reward lens. Medicine doesn't share those views. Even highly trained, functional, integrative medical practitioners, they kind of get it. But you have to realize those are the glasses I have on. That's my entire life. And then you layer on this pleasure hedonist lens where I don't want to be-

Mike Roesslein:

[inaudible 00:10:14], Steve, by the way, in that I'm not Ben Greenfield or Dave Asprey either.

Steve Wright:

Yeah, yeah. The reason why I couldn't stop and the reason why I was trying all these things from Asia and Russia and China and everywhere else was like I wanted to know why can't I have dairy? Why can't I have gluten? Why can't I drink alcohol and feel great the next day? How come I still suffer with generalized anxiety disorder? How come we built this company and helped potentially millions of people, but I don't feel content. These are questions that maybe I'm the only one that wrestles with them, but it turns out I'm not. And so I have this desire where I want to be really healthy, but I also want to keep exploring and have this hedonistic pleasure. I want to have wine and cheese and come visit you

in Italy and all these things and live to hopefully 100, 120 and do the whole thing. So that sends me on rabbit holes and makes me do tests and experiments on myself that not everybody's willing to undertake because they don't all work. And some of them are very painful.

Mike Roesslein:

I'm going to link that webinar blow, by the way. I don't even know if that offer still exists, if that ebook you had, if the link we have for it even is relevant.

Steve Wright:

Love to check.

Mike Roesslein:

But we have the interview somewhere. I'll find the URL. I'll link it below. You can hear all about Steve's renegade? What did you ...

Steve Wright:

Yeah. Maverick Healing was the product.

Mike Roesslein:

Maverick Healing. Yeah, it's like a whole bunch of super cool little ... And we talked about 20 of them at least on the webinar. So you don't need the ... If the link doesn't work anymore, you'll learn a lot on the webinar and tons of interesting stuff. I think I bought about five things because of what you told me on that. And I started taking Lithium.

Steve Wright:

Yeah. Lithium's really important for brain health.

Mike Roesslein:

Watch that one. Learn about lithium. So then I get a message, I don't know, it's probably three or four years ago now.

Steve Wright:

Yeah. Coming up on four years.

Mike Roesslein:

I'm starting a new company. We're starting with digestive enzymes. And digestive enzymes are super beneficial for tons of people. And it was actually, we had been retailing most of the Microbiome Labs line and a couple other product lines. And to my surprise, they have a really interesting and unique product line when it comes to gut supplements. And they never made a digestive enzyme. And it was something I was still recommending on the side to people, but we never retailed one or put one in our shop because frankly they're hit or miss. And when I worked with really tricky clients, I would buy the super expensive ones, which I'm not going to name any names, but there's a couple brands that are really well known and they have their premium one. And if I gave a protocol to those people to take as

many of those as they probably should take, it was going to be like 200 bucks a month in digestive enzymes.

And we didn't want to sell those because I don't like that. So we just didn't have it. And then it was this big missing thing and I was like, sweet. I have been waiting to have a digestive enzyme that works, that I can stand behind, that I can add because it's a perfect compliment to the things we already have around here and our gut interested audience loved it right away. That's the HoloZyme. And then you kind of grew from there. So just tell us a little bit about the evolution over at Healthy Gut. And we have other webinars we'll link below that go into the products more so you don't have to deep dive into the products. Just where'd it go from there and where's it at now?

Steve Wright:

Yeah, I mean, so I've been using supplements. I think of supplements as a food group. I don't understand why other people don't.

Mike Roesslein:

I do too. Yeah.

Steve Wright:

I've given up on this idea that we can all do our yoga practices and sing Kumbaya to the world and eat organic and live healthy lives. I think we've done past that era with glyphosate and GMOs and 85,000 new toxins that are never going away from the chemical companies. That era of possibility I think is behind us, but people are still stuck thinking that maybe the old way is possible. And so to me, supplements have always been useful. I've always wanted to, again, get the most reward with the least risk. And so even in high school, I was taking Nootropics and creatine. At 12, I started ordering stuff off the internet and my mom was like, you're going to get our credit card hacked.

Mike Roesslein:

I was [inaudible 00:14:58] creatine at 13.

Steve Wright:

So I love compounds that can give me an edge. I love research. I love the fact that there are other ways to help the world that's not pharmaceutical ways. There's ways to actually help people do the normal [inaudible 00:15:18]. And so Healthy Gut is me kind of scratching that itch and helping to improve the world. And there are really awesome companies. Like you said, it used to cost me about \$150 to \$180 a month for my digestive enzymes because there wasn't a product that worked very well. So I had to combine multiple companies at the same time to not have bloating when my life got really messed up.

One of our businesses collapsed overnight due to Google and some other things. My girlfriend at the time, which became my wife, Shay, was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was just all the stress came back and with it all my GI stuff came back. And so it was kind of back against the wall. What am I good at? What do I love doing? And what will people pay for and what would be helpful to the world? And it was like, I need to innovate on these products that drive me nuts. It drives me nuts that there's not a really good HCL product. There's not a really good enzyme product. And I feel like it was just not sexy for the big companies, like the big supplement companies to innovate on. It just wasn't that sexy. So that was kind of my thought was like, all right, let's apply this scientific rigor, this engineering rigor and just ...

I have this philosophy in cooking where if you get everything fresh and local and really high quality, you don't have to be a good chef. If you just start from fresh.

Mike Roesslein:

That's what I learned when I moved to Italy is Tuscany is famous for its food and it's quality, taste of everything and whatever. And people think, and I thought this when I moved here too, that they're just really skilled cooks. Wow, everyone in Tuscany must just be really good at cooking. No. There's five ingredients max in almost all the meals, but they come from right over there and they were picked a minute ago or you know the farmer or it's whatever. And everything is fresh, everything is seasonal. Everything is made with those ingredients. And it's the ingredients. It's not the skill of putting them together. I mean, yes, there's chefs here and there's restaurants that do have a little bit more elaborate food, but the actual staples of the cuisine here, most of them are super simple. They were made by rural peasant farmers for most of the time. And it's been polished up a little bit, but it's really, really, really simple. And it's because the ingredients are awesome. It has nothing to do with 27 spices and this technique. It's not French cooking. French cuisine is like do all the weird to the food. This is put five things on a plate together. It works. So it's like the same concept.

Steve Wright:

Yeah, that's how I approach building products. That's how I approach building supplements too, is like what is literally the best in the world, not just a cursory review on Google. I'm talking hours, weeks of my life trying to figure out-

Mike Roesslein:

Steve's a research lunatic. I can vouch for this.

Steve Wright:

Chrome told me I'm out of compliance with the amount of tabs I have open yesterday. You can't have more than a hundred per browser. I was like, well, I only have five browsers. Why is that a problem?

Mike Roesslein:

Says who? Steve's going to break Chrome.

Steve Wright:

Yeah, I did. I did. I had-

Mike Roesslein:

So Chrome stops working for everybody, we know who was the culprit.

Steve Wright:

Yeah, it's around 500 browser tabs, I guess.

Mike Roesslein:

So you find the best possible ingredients. When you told me, oh, we're making an HCL product, I was like, dude, why, there's like thousands of them. And then we did the webinar on it and you educated me

as to why these ingredients were chosen and how it works like it does. And it's got, I'll call it supportive formula and ingredients where you're not just taking HCL and it addresses the issue.

Steve Wright:

Yeah, because everything's a system, remember, everything's ... Whenever I'm designing a product, I'm not just designing it for whatever I tell you on a webinar. I've already thought seven layers deeper than that of how does the HCL impact the small intestine? How is that going to impact the breakdown of the food? What are the best ingredients that we could put in there? And then backtracking to who's going to react to this? Who is going to refund this product or who is not going to see results? And how do we tweak the formula to make sure they're included and they're going to get results. Because that's the other thing that just drove me nuts was that some people would make really good products, but they would include ingredients or fillers or additives or stuff that really sensitive folks who are so courageous and willing and brave and ready to help themselves, but they can't find what they need because they're so sensitive.

Mike Roesslein:

Most of the consumers in this industry. People aren't researching health supplements online for the most part, especially ones around GI symptoms, unless they have health problems and they're sensitive to things. So then loading up pills with tons of that crap, that's like when you said the next product is magnesium and I was like magnesium and what? You're like, no, just magnesium.

Steve Wright:

Which blew me away. It blew me away. Think of your favorite ... Think of Thorn, think of Pure. These are supposedly these amazing \$200 million companies that have our backs and their magnesium still has a bunch of crap in it. And it's just like these guys, everyone just stopped innovating. And so I think that's where Healthy Gut steps in. We're not going to be a gut health only company. We believe that the gut is the source or connected to the source of a lot of complaints, whether you have an eye complaint, a brain, a bone, a muscle, some immune system dysregulation. The gut is involved in every one of those components. And so my product philosophy is the best ingredients in the world and not just a regular research review with a PhD. We're talking like my maniacal endless pursuit for the best in the world, build it for sensitive folks and then build it with this complexity in mind that we're not just going to impact the gut, we're going to impact all the organs, we're going to impact the whole life. We're going to impact every meal.

And so there's just simple things like with enzymes that the reason why we were all spending \$150 to \$200 a month on these enzyme products is because of this one patent that nobody knew about. And it took me ... You wouldn't believe how many months it took me to figure that out, which is why no one else was doing it. And so that's kind of what we've been doing with our product lineup and where we'll go into the future is just like, what is the research? Where's the research going? I'm not trying to build what everybody knows about. It's not that L-glutamine is bad for the gut. Some people can't take it and it's really helpful for other people. It's just that the puck is already moved. The game is already way past that. In the research journals, the people who are literally locked in labs and sometimes they're getting millions of dollars from companies, sometimes they're just on grants at universities, but these guys, all they do is Petri dishes and gut stuff and biotics this. And those people aren't focused on IBS or IBD or autoimmune conditions, but it's taking their work and their discoveries and getting it to market faster than it's ever happened before. So that's part of what we're trying to do.

Mike Roesslein:

It's a cool project, man, and you're the right guy for it because a project like that needs a research obsessed maniac behind the wheel. And I'm grateful that you do that. And we'll link everything down below. So in the show notes for this, we'll have links to other webinars and products and the shop on our site for Healthy Gut and everything else. So everybody can look below. Check that stuff out. We're recording a new webinar tomorrow that will air way before this does. So we'll even-

Steve Wright:

Wait, I want to say one more thing. Can I say one more thing?

Mike Roesslein:

Yeah, you can say whatever you want.

Steve Wright:

The other thing that just pissed me off about supplement companies is that when I had a clinic ... So we had a telemedicine clinic in 2013, way before all the cool people that are doing it now. I'm often five to 10 years ahead of wherever the market is now, which is really bad for my financial wellbeing, but it's just where my brain is at. And so what I learned in that was that ... Take curcumin, everybody's heard of curcumin. It's an amazing product. The research says you need about 1200, 1500 milligrams to make effect in a body. Now, no one sells capsules or dosages at that level. They all sell you 500 milligrams or 300 milligrams. That's mistake number one from a supplement company. But mistake number two is that some people actually only need 1000, but some people need 5000. And they're not being told. No one tells the consumer that we all fall on a bell curve of statistics. And that's 34% of people fall on the tail end of the bell curve. That means 14 to 15% of people need way more like 2, 3, 4, 5 x more of a compound. And this is true with vitamin D. It's true with everything. Magnesium as well. And then 15% of people need way less, one to two to three times less. Otherwise they can get toxic.

Mike Roesslein:

To stimulate the same physiological response?

Steve Wright:

Yeah. It's just genetics. Some people have more receptors. Some people are hyper able to grab nutrients out of their intestines. Some people are hypo, they can't get any nutrients. Think about the skinny people out there who are always trying to gain weight and get muscular. They have to eat 5,000, 6,000 calories to pull it off. If I did that, I would gain so much fat so fast.

Mike Roesslein:

Three pounds a day. I would gain three pounds a day.

Steve Wright:

Yeah.

Mike Roesslein:

I've done it before. It was challenge accepted college. College, me too. I was probably about 250 when I left college. And I think you might be a touch taller than me, but we're not super tall guys.

Steve Wright:

No, no. We're not going to be competing in any sports.

Mike Roesslein:

I was the champion of the Chinese buffet in college. And I'm pretty sure that I weighed more when I got home than I did when I went there.

Steve Wright:

I bet.

Mike Roesslein:

So yeah. I had those friends, but I was never that guy. That's really interesting.

Steve Wright:

My point being is that I feel like it's on the onus of the people who designed the products and are doing the research to tell people about that, which is why our entire ... The people who are on the phones, the people who are answering your customer support tickets are all trained by me about the products, but they're all health coaches. And the goal is to not give you medical advice when you call in. We're not trying to compete with your doctors or anything, but we know our products better than anybody. And so when you pick up the phone, we want to know, are you a hyper or a hypo responder? And we want to educate you that, hey, this product could be doubled or it could be tripled, and that might be the breakthrough that you need in your health. And I feel like that's the other thing that just drove me nuts about supplement companies is that you could create this amazing product, but no one told you that for 20% of people they might need to take more and for 10% of people, they might need to take less. And so that's the other thing that we're trying to do at Healthy Gut is make real customer support, like real support where we have your interest in mind part of our mission.

Mike Roesslein:

That's very unique. I don't think I've seen anybody else do that. So kudos to that. When we get questions and we send them to your team, we get really thorough elaborate answers that are very helpful. So thank you for sharing all that and for all you're doing. I would like to leave the audience with a couple needle movers. So we talked a lot about supplements. They can learn about the supplements below. But it could be about gut health, it could be about your anxiety, it could be about any health issue that you have struggled with. I'm looking for two action steps or needle movers or practical things that you've found for your A equals 1 have been a contributing factor in allowing you to be more resilient in living the lifestyle that you want without suffering horribly because of it. Or it could be supplements, but whatever you want to share.

Steve Wright:

No, no, it's not supplements. I mean, I think there's just been so many needle movers for me, it's hard to pick. I mean, I know that this is potentially a psychedelic friendly community.

Mike Roesslein:

Yeah. You can share that.

Steve Wright:

I would say that the nervous system is how I would think about that. The nervous system, there's basically three real root causes that every other root cause nests into, which is your nervous system, your hormones, and your gut. So if you want to talk about viruses or mold or whatever, it's all involved with your nervous system, your hormones and your gut, whatever else you want to complain about or identify with a test, you're still going to have to come back to those three core areas in your body. And I feel like that would be the thing. I do a lot of gut stuff and you could do a lot of gut stuff with supplements and whatnot, but you have to take care of your nervous system. And if you've never explored rewiring it, like really tearing it down, looking at it, and rebuilding it using simple things like grounding every day, like go outside, walk around in the grass. Thank the earth that you're still here. Look in the sun. Get some sunlight. That's like level one free. You can do that today.

Most people don't do it because it's weird and uncomfortable. But if you don't do that, you're going to end up probably in a psychedelic office someday doing ketamine injections, psilocybin journeys. And even then, you should probably still do that because that changed my life. It helped me deal with things that were in my nervous system from birth that were never going to be handled no matter the fact that I had done 500,000 hours of cognitive behavioral therapy. I've been in all kinds of training programs for therapies and modalities on that, and it didn't touch it because it's a different realm of healing. And so I guess my takeaway would be to do all the dietary stuff you want, do all the supplement stuff you want, but take your nervous system super seriously. Take the grounding and just getting sunlight on your face every day seriously. And then look into that next step of thinking about how could you explore rewiring your nervous system using guided integration therapeutics with psychedelics.

Mike Roesslein:

Very cool. Your takeaways are a similar ... I recorded a solo episode for the first episode of this series, and there's a lot of overlap between your takeaways and mine, which we did not talk about prior to recording this.

Steve Wright:

We didn't.

Mike Roesslein:

That doesn't surprise me. We have a very similar arc and trajectory. You're much more into research than I am, but other than that, we have this very similar arc and trajectory. So thanks for sharing all that. Thanks for creating such a cool company that's doing awesome stuff. We're grateful to be able to partner with you guys. We are recording a webinar tomorrow about solving gut digestive challenge puzzles. We'll link that down below too because that will air before this. So we'll have a whole bunch of educational stuff down below if you want to nerd out a little bit more with Steve. And yeah, man, just really appreciate the time and everything you're doing.

Steve Wright:

Yeah, thanks, Michael. Thanks for having me on. I appreciate what you're doing.