

MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh, April 2022
Kelsey Moreira

Cookie Dough with a Mission!
Reducing Social Stigmas around Addiction Recovery and Mental Health



Kelsey Moreira is the founder and fearless leader of Doughp, a mission-driven, edible and bakeable cookie dough business that ships their product to thousands of households every week. Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Kelsey shares the exciting journey of her entrepreneurial startup company, including her *Shark Tank* appearance, and openly tells her addiction and recovery story. She explains what it means to be a "recovery-friendly workplace" and reveals three core values that can help every listener become a better leader and more financially successful.

WC: Hey everybody, Winn Claybaugh here. Welcome to this incredible issue of MASTERS and I love days like this, where I get to interview smart, incredible, passionate people. Trust me, I have no problem interviewing somebody's who's only about making money, because I think that that's a very worthy, worthy cause and ambition. People who say they don't care to make a lot of money, I believe that they would lie about other things as well.

KM: [Laughs]

WC: So there's nothing wrong with that. But when somebody has that passion for building a company, being that entrepreneur, making money, but at the same time, every step of the way, using that platform, using their passion and their endeavors to put a spotlight on a cause that they're passionate about, and that's what this interview is going to be all about. I'm sitting here today with Kelsey Moreira, who is the founder and fearless leader of a company called Doughp, spelled D-O-U-G-H-P, which we'll have her explain for us.

KM: [Laughs]

WC: It's a mission-driven, edible and bakeable cookie dough business that ships their product into thousands of households every single week. Since starting the company in 2017, after a decade-long tech career, she's appeared on ABC's *Shark Tank*—that's kind of exciting. Kelsey was also named Forbes 30 Under 30, which, those of you who know what that means, you know that that's huge. That's profound. As you'll learn through this interview, Kelsey is using Doughp's platform for good: working to reduce social stigmas around addiction recovery and mental health. Kelsey left a 10-year career in tech at the age of 26 to start

the company. Let's see, before *Shark Tank* you were doing \$800,000 lifetime in sales, and now you're beyond—what, \$10 million in sales? Is that accurate?

KM: Yeah, almost there. Like \$9.6 as of today, so *[laughs]* we're just getting right up close to \$10 million but pretty surreal—

WC: Well, let's just say—

KM: —for sure.

WC: —by the time this interview comes out, in a couple of weeks, you're over \$10 million.

KM: There you go!

WC: Can we just say that?

KM: We can just say it. It's pretty awesome.

WC: I like to tell the truth in advance so let's just say that it's over \$10 million.

KM: *[Laughs]* What a great qualifier. That's the truth in advance. Yeah, I love it.

WC: *[Laughs]* There you go. You're also rolling out in Costco and Walmart and other areas. I mean, pretty exciting what's happening with your company. Congratulations!

KM: Thank you so much. Very surreal. Walmart and Costco hitting in the same month was like equally terrifying and thrilling all at the same time, but they're some heavy hitters that'll really put Doughp on the map as we try to make it a household name.

WC: Okay, so a 10-year career in tech, meaning you started at the age of 16. How old are you now, if you don't mind me asking?

KM: Yeah, I'm 31 now; into my glorious thirties *[laughs]*.

WC: They are glorious, especially starting off the right way with what you're doing, and I think, to jump into this—well, first of all, Doughp, D-O-U-G-H-P. Where did you come up with that name and why the spelling? Just give our listeners some background behind that.

KM: Yeah, so it is dough with a P on the end. We make cookie dough. You can eat it raw and you can bake it. I was just desperate to find a really fun, punny name that would have *dough* in it when I was first coming up with the idea, you know, marketing lover by trade before and was destined to come up with a brand first before I even really had a recipe finalized. Doughp was really this byproduct of wanting to have a pun and my friend said, "Oh my gosh, like dope could have

dough in it,” as I’m explaining how I just want to make a really dope dessert company [laughs] and so we stuck with that. We made our dope pun and, you know, it’s Doughp for cool and for being legit, which came into the tagline, *Making Legit Cookie Dough*. And it really is legit. You can eat it raw and you can bake it. It’s made with real ingredients you can actually pronounce and it’s legit speaking truth to shared struggles, like we’ll talk about today.

WC: Wait, you can eat it raw! Why? How? How do we do that?

KM: Yeah [laughs], so, you know we all sneak bites of cookie dough like by ourselves one bite at a time, feeling super guilty because there’s raw eggs in it, usually, and raw flour as well. With Doughp, it’s all heat-treated flour so we use commercially heat-treated flour to kill the risk of E. coli, and we don’t use any raw eggs. We use a flaxseed substitute for our eggs in our recipes, so there are no raw eggs and no one will get Salmonella. A double win there [laughs]. You get to eat as much as you want.

WC: You know, that is a double win, no Salmonella [laughs].

KM: [Laughs]

WC: So tell us what some of the flavors are, because you got real creative with all of that as well. And the names of the flavors and all of that.

KM: Sure, yeah. I mean, longtime number-one bestseller has been Ride or Die. That’s our chocolate chip and it’s what people think of when they think of cookie dough. We used to have storefronts that people would come in and they’d see all the flavors and they would just be like, “I’ll just have the cookie dough,” and we’d have to explain that they all are, but Ride or Die is really what you think of when you think of cookie dough. So, chocolate chip’s our most popular. And then, Cookie Monsta is our runner-up and has actually, in the last few months, been beating out Ride or Die in sales. Cookie Monsta is a blue cookies and cream cookie dough. So, imagine like a boatload of Oreos smashed into cookie dough and it’s turned blue for our favorite Sesame Street character. So, we’ve had some fun with different ones. Fairy Dust is another great one. If you take a look at the characters we have for these online, someone told me that they think Fairy Dust looks like Elton John in a tutu and now I can’t unsee that, so feel free to take a peek at Fairy Dust [laughs] and see if you see it, too.

WC: [Laughs]. Well then, you need to be sending him some packages there, as you did for me. And by the way, thank you for the shipment. None of it went to waste, if you know what I mean. It was eaten, it was gone, it was incredible, so congratulations.

KM: Thank you so much. It’s good stuff. It’s so fun to watch people actually try it and see their reactions like we used to in the stores. We went to a convention last week, Expo West, and you know, just thousands and thousands of people getting to try a bite and to see their reactions in person is amazing and to see their

reaction to the mission as well, in person. We kind of ditched the fancy booth idea and we put up a big banner as the backdrop that said, “In lieu of a fancy booth we’ve donated \$40,000 to the She Recovers Foundation to support mental health and addiction recovery.”

WC: You know, I saw that because—

KM: Yeah.

WC: You know, you’re a new company and to build a company you need exposure and how you get exposure—I can’t tell you how many of those conventions I’ve been to, mostly in the professional beauty industry and now in the dog grooming and food industry, and you walk these convention halls and there’s just booth after booth after booth and, of course, that’s where you get the exposure. And you’re there passing out samples and talking to people and doing everything you can to make connections and yet you have an empty booth with just a big banner.

KM: Yeah, it turned some heads and I will say everyone was taking photos of our booth and not of the really expensive kind of over-the-top stuff. So in doing very little, we actually stood out. It was like, here’s our mission, here’s our delicious product, here’s some super-excited staff and the founder who can’t wait to meet you, and that said more than the booth ever could have if it were kind of done up like you’re supposed to, quote unquote.

WC: Congratulations.

KM: Thank you.

WC: I bet you got some—maybe some pushback or some resistance from people, like, “Kelsey, what the heck are you doing?”

KM: Yeah. I mean, it was definitely a little head-turning at first when I shared it with our team and everything, but very quickly after reading it, you know, they’re like, “All right, just got goosebumps,” like, “This is going to be amazing—

WC: Wow!

KM: “This is the right way to go,” so we had the support of our advisors and broker and all that good stuff before we went. They were just excited for everyone else to see it.

WC: Well, we’re going to get into your personal story of struggle with alcohol. We’re going to get into your story of sobriety. We’re going to talk about why you’ve chosen mental health and addiction recovery as that platform, but tell us about *Shark Tank* because I know people are thinking about that. How did you make that happen? What was the experience like? Did they invest in you? Tell us that story.

KM: Yeah, *Shark Tank* is such a blast. I mean it's like kind of surreal still. Sometimes people send me a screen shot or a photo of their TV if they see a rerun of it coming up or something and it's hard to believe it really happened. I don't know anybody in show business so I truly got in with just an open casting call in San Francisco. I sat on the curb waiting for my chance to shoot my shot. It was like 6 AM, sitting outside in SF on Market Street, waiting with 500 other entrepreneurs that day, and more than 40,000 will apply each season so it was already like feeling like a real longshot, you know. I thought I had a good chance because I've got a great product and a fun story to tell and a good reason behind why we're doing what we're doing but you kind of feel like, *Well, so does everyone else [laughs]; we'll see what happens*. So, just went in there and you get 90 seconds to pitch to the producers. There's a bunch of tables you get sent to after it's your time to go and walked up to my table and did the 90 seconds and by the time the 90 seconds had ended, they were like digging into the samples and asking more questions, so I think I was in there for something maybe like five minutes, actually, in the first pitch. And it took six months from there of audition callbacks, like video submissions, just so many rounds to get through submitting what this might be like if you actually made it on, and then was selected to film. And this was like two days before my three-year sobriety anniversary and so it was a really fun thing. Like on my two-year we had our first grand opening for Doughp, and on the three-year I was filmed for *Shark Tank*, so I've had a kind of fun run, seeing like what's going to happen each September when I hit another sober birthday and that was a big one. So, got to be in front of you know, Barbara Corcoran, Mark Cuban, Robert Herjavec, Lori Greiner, and of course Mr. Wonderful was there as well and it was a blast. I was so nervous, I was sure I was going to pee my pants before I walked down the hall *[laughs]* when they are about to open the doors. I'm a solo founder so I was standing there by myself and they count down from some ungodly number like 100 because there's so much happening, you know, off stage that you can't see that they're running around getting everything ready. And then the doors opened and like all my nerves went away and I just walked down that hall, hit my mark, nailed my pitch, and went into questions. A fun, behind-the-scenes thing is it's actually an hour and 15 minutes that I was in there, nonstop questions and discussion. They don't stop filming until every shark is out or you've made a deal. So, I think the longest ever was like two and a half hours and for each pitch you really only see seven or eight minutes. So, pretty crazy what goes on behind the scenes. I had a great discussion about the business. Knew my numbers like front to back and felt really proud of myself for just the presentation as a businessperson overall and had Barbara Corcoran say I was the most sophisticated store owner she'd ever met in her life, which was like, whoa, she's met a lot of store owners, so some great accolades about my skills as an operator. But they ended up all going out around primarily reasons for cookie dough not being good for you and this idea that it's not healthy, that the obesity epidemic. And, you know, I've got my own case to make around that but it's all about balance and it's meant to be a dessert that's a little moment of self-care and just treat yourself. I want it to be nostalgic and delicious, just like what you ate as a kid. And we've got butter and brown sugar

but it's made with seven all-natural ingredients that start every base recipe and then we add Oreos or rainbow sprinkles or some fun stuff. But, yeah, I just think life's about balance so we agreed to disagree and left. Still clicked my heels and waved them and thanked them as I left the tank and went on to, as you said, you know, grow it to more than 10 million in lifetime sales today. So, I knew I was onto something and they would have been lucky to take a bite [*laughs*].

WC: What's really interesting is, I wonder how many of the sharks, after you left and the cameras weren't rolling, were thinking, *Gosh, I wish I could have invested in that.*

KM: Yeah.

WC: Like they were just probably worried that, *Am I going to get called out for child obesity*, for investing in this product but secretly they're like, *Gosh, this is such a good deal and I wish I could be a part of it.*

KM: Yeah, I mean hilariously, Mark Cuban, who was maybe most notable in saying "the obesity epidemic" and he just can't get behind products that say, "Let's eat more," he had like devoured his entire sample plate, which was more than I thought anyone would actually eat. It was so that they could get just a bite of all the different flavors we had but it was like eight small scoops of cookie dough and he cleared the plate.

WC: Did they put that on camera?

KM: Well, yeah, you see a few shots of him eating it up, so yeah.

WC: [*Laughs*]

KM: He enjoyed the product himself, which is fun, but totally understand. Everyone has their own investment, you know, guidelines. And I went on and found another investor a couple of months later and have grown the business with relatively little capital for what a large company we have today and had primarily raised to open up brick and mortar storefronts in the past so very proud of what we've done, yeah.

WC: Wow, this is great! Well, I think we'll probably get a chance to talk a little bit more about the company but I think people have a really good idea on what Doughp is all about. How do they order? How do they learn more about the product itself?

KM: I appreciate this. This is like a drool break, so if your drooling because we're talking about so much cookie dough, you can get some at doughp.com. So, it's D-O-U-G-H-P.com. Connect with us on social @Doughp but, yeah, if you want to order it we ship nationwide. Even to two provinces in Canada. It makes a great gift. We've got a sober birthday box, a regular birthday box, anniversary gifts, new baby gifts; all that good stuff, so it makes a really fun gift, too.

WC: Congratulations. Well, let's jump into this story and I think the best way to start it is just to ask you to tell your personal story. You know, high school, college, alcoholism, overcoming that. You even, in the information that you sent to me to get ready for this, you mentioned that there was some bullying in your past, too, so, you know, just tell us your story.

KM: Yeah, so for me, I mean, the story starts perhaps back when my parents got divorced. I was six years old when they split and it shifted my life from having, you know, parents who weren't getting along so hot, as they did get divorced, to having really two very inconsistent home experiences and life was very different at my mom's house than it was at my dad's house. And I found myself, I think, leaning on accomplishments to get attention from my parents. And you know, some digging deep I've had to do over the past years to figure out like what led me to the troubles with alcohol that you mentioned, and I think not having kind of that consistency really led me to wanting to get attention and at first, with accomplishments. So, even getting a B in school and I was absolutely hysterical; thought I had completely failed. I was so hard on myself. This perfectionism has been something that's stayed with me for a long time. I just have to find better ways to cope with it now, but perfectionism and anxiety were really like troubling me as a child even in grade-school years. So, when I got the first opportunity to drink at a party when I was 14, I drank until I blacked out, that very first time and it was like the first time my mind had been quiet. It was like I didn't have to be on, I didn't have to be, you know—my mind didn't have to be running and I could just pretend to be one of the kids: carefree like everybody else seemed to be and try to fit in with the cool kids. And I really leaned on alcohol through the years to do exactly that, to try and fit in and to stay I guess in touch with what I thought would be a cool persona in the school-aged years because I had been sort of swept out of that at 16; got the opportunity to work at Intel. You can see how this maybe compounded the issues with anxiety and stress and the ability to really overapply myself with my perfectionism issues, which fueled the anxiety. And so, my trouble with alcohol just carried on through the years and you know, for me, very high-functioning alcoholic to still be getting straight A's even through college. I had like a 4.12 in high school and I had great grades through college but the times in the evenings, when I would go and drink and party, one drink was never enough, and I would drink until I blacked out, I'd say, 75 percent of the time. It was very, very challenging for me and I'd wake up the next morning and say, "I'm never going to do this again. I'm going to get it together. Here's my plan for the next time." And I'd try, "I'm not going to have one or I'm only going to have tequila or I'm only going to have this or that." It was like I really tried every variation I could to try and keep alcohol in my life and stop disappointing those that I loved who are close to me and disappointing myself; scaring the heck out of my parents. You know, I was hospitalized a few times in college for overconsumption of alcohol and lost my belongings countless times. By the time I got out of college, the fact that those issues didn't stop: when I would still go out, I couldn't help myself but drink to excess. And I realize now, kind of what a sit and coast pattern I'd been on, not really striving to get kind of Kelsey to her fullest extent. When I hit my own rock bottom, you know, my chance to just stop digging,

September 14, 2015, I was on a business trip in Barcelona and I started drinking around 10 in the morning and I came to at 3:30 in a stranger's apartment in Barcelona. And it was like the most clear morning picking up the pieces that I had ever had, where I said I am never going to do this again and I want to get sober so I called my Nana, who was 21 years sober when she passed away, and told her I needed to get my stuff together and I was ready to get sober and I wanted her help, and she'd been waiting for that phone call for a long time.

WC: Wow!

KM: Yeah, she told me to get my butt to an AA meeting and let's do this thing. So, I found an English-speaking AA meeting that morning in Barcelona and I have been sober, it will be seven years this September so, very proud of that decision and—

WC: Wow!

KM: —it changed the whole trajectory of my life.

WC: Wow! Wait, what's your sobriety date?

KM: 9/14/15.

WC: Wow! Okay. So, mine is September 15th, so I'm going to mark that and remember you—

KM: Love it.

WC: —around the exact same time so—

KM: Birthday twins.

WC: —so, yes. That's awesome. And I'm sure that many, many people can relate to this story or they've heard somebody tell a similar story but when you talk about being high functioning, just define that a little bit more for our listeners.

KM: Yeah, I think society gives this view of what an alcoholic should look like and I think it's really important to share stories like mine and others who had everything seemingly together. If you looked on the surface it's like she's got a great job, 10 years at Intel, like things were set. I could have stayed until I retired and had a great relationship, had friends, it seems like everything's okay. Still had both parents in my life. It's like you haven't gotten a DUI, all these things that, in many ways, for those struggling like myself, make excuses where, "It's not that bad. I haven't gotten a DUI yet or I haven't been arrested yet." Like it was sort of all these excuses because it was so high-functioning. Things seemed okay but it really comes down to how do you feel about your relationship with alcohol and is it adding value to your life? And when I hit the point that I realized it was definitely not adding value and the negatives from it were far outweighing

any positive benefit, it didn't make sense to try to keep it anymore. I would have been doing the whole it's insane to keep trying the same thing multiple times and expect a different result, so we had to try something different and really make it stick this time. I'd tried to get sober as like a little reset when I was 21; did four months not drinking and, you know, within a few weeks of drinking again, I was blacking out. I had tried that and this full decision to really get alcohol permanently out of my life was the last step.

WC: Wow. Have you heard of the book *Sober Curious*?

KM: I have heard of it; have not read it, though.

WC: It's pretty incredible and one of the questions that she asks to the reader in that book is, "Would your life be better without alcohol?"

KM: Mm.

WC: And I think a lot of people would say, yeah, even though they could say, "Well, I've never had a DUI," but to have, let's say, one day a year you wake up with a hangover. So, on that one morning you would wake up and say, "Gosh, my life would be better without alcohol right now," which is not necessarily, because I know that for us to talk about this I'm sure really upsets some people. Like how dare you make that recommendation. How dare you discuss this, but there's a bigger message here. Everybody has their own choices and their own relationships with alcohol and with other things in life, other choices that we make in life, including with cookie dough. We all have our own relationship with—

KM: [Laughs]

WC: —that we have to navigate through as the Sharks did on *Shark Tank*. Can I—

KM: Right.

WC: —have a relationship with cookie dough. So I get it but there's a bigger message here and I'm wondering, because you're also talking about mental health and the stigma surrounding that, why are you pulling that into the same conversation with being a recovering alcoholic?

KM: Yeah, I love this question and they are so hand-in-hand. It actually, even discussing that, gives a chance to elevate this connection, right, of like mental health and addiction recovery. If you're not taking care of your mental health, so often various addictions—substance use disorder is just one of them—but various addictions are filling this hole or blocking you from really dealing with the emotions and traumas of the past that are lying underneath. And, you know, even the choice to just stop drinking, I still had to go to therapy—still go to therapy today to try and work through and identify what led me to drinking and come up with healthier coping mechanisms to support my mental health. That's something we really try to elevate at Doughp. It's like let's give people this

conversation to evaluate what's working, what isn't working in their life, to talk about therapy, to recommend that people reach out and get help, whether it is for mental health struggles or that that's already turned into struggles with substance use or other addictions. It's really just a conversation to let people know they're not alone and I think they go so well hand-in-hand.

WC: You say that it's okay to not be okay. Tell us what you mean by that.

KM: Yeah, there's like society wants you to have this face on all the time, that everything's perfect and even the, like, don't bother someone else with your troubles, you know? Like don't be a downer. It's kind of this idea where someone asks, "Hey, how are you Winn?" and Winn says, "I'm great, how are you?" And it's like we're expected to say that I'm great. Something I've started recently is trying to ask someone, instead of just how are you, I'm like, "Hey, give me like one high and one low from the last week. How's it been?" And that is like a pause. It's like I get to be like, "Hey, maybe everything's not awesome and that's okay because we're all going through such a shared experience here." We could just take that veil down and we don't have to keep, you know, BS-ing. It could just be alright to not be great today, you know?

WC: You have this other statement, which I absolutely love. When I read it in the information that you sent to me, I was just thrilled and jumping up because I had said the same thing and I've had other friends say the same thing and that is "Sobriety is your superpower." Explain that.

KM: Mm, yes. I love this. You know this idea and something I started saying kind of came up after, I think it was in 2019, and I was asked, "Do you tell would-be investors that you're sober?" I was going through a fundraiser and pitching and whatnot and when I was asked that, I thought, *Well, like, heck yeah, I can't wait to tell them I'm sober. I think it's one of the coolest things about me.* And this idea that something that's otherwise been so shameful or stigmatized or like something was wrong with you, I look at this decision to be in sobriety as like something really cool, truly my superpower that I saw something wasn't working in my life and I went and made a change. I didn't just sit and wallow in it. I didn't sit suffering. I didn't stay in the down, it's like I'm actually in the up and the awesomeness. So, I want to look at sobriety as a superpower and encourage other people to do the same. This idea that you need to just keep it to yourself and deal with it on your own, don't tell anybody else that you've struggled, it's a loss for you to not be able to share it, get it off your chest, and celebrate with other people how freaking awesome this decision was. But it's also a loss for others who would benefit from hearing your story, from hearing the journey you went through and maybe resonating with it themselves and reaching out for help if they might not have otherwise. Sobriety as a superpower is something I'm trying to normalize [*laughs*].

WC: You know what? Good for you and I'm not sure where I got it from; maybe a mentor planted that thought into my head because I had the thought even before

I was clean and sober, that when somebody was applying for a job, an opportunity with me, and sobriety was part of their résumé, I considered it to be a plus. Like, oh my gosh they overcame that! They're going to be a great attribute. They're going to be a—

KM: Yeah!

WC: —great team member because they've overcome that.

KM: Totally.

WC: But maybe other people are—people that were trying to advise you were just thinking, no, people are going to see that that's a bad mark on your résumé.

KM: Yeah, or like you're risky or something or yeah. I'm so glad that you saw it that way. That is awesome and there's big movements out there to try and help change the view of this in the workplace. The Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative is really moving. It's in, I think, 28 states now or something like that, but businesses can go and get designated as a Recovery Friendly Workplace and this idea—

WC: Whoa-whoa-whoa-whoa-whoa, that's news to me. Explain that again?

KM: [*Laughs*] Yeah, so Doughp recently became designated as a Recovery Friendly Workplace so it is like training tools—

WC: Wait, I'm writing this down. Recovery Friendly Workplace.

KM: Huge, yes. So, all the tools and training for leadership teams, for management, and even down individual staff. Understanding how to bring up conversations around mental health, addiction recovery, and suicide prevention in the workplace and help break down that wall that employer and employee have had for so long where, you know, much like I was talking about with society: it's like put on the front. You need to be fine. You need to show up and do your job and work is work and leave your personal life at home. This idea of a Recovery Friendly Workplace is how do we celebrate this together out loud? How do we open up conversations, extend a hand for help inside the workplace, and not expect that they go and deal with it outside or risk being fired if they bring it up? For example, there are still businesses where if substance use disorder is discovered, you're terminated immediately, which is probably the last thing someone who's struggling with substance abuse—

WC: That's legal?

KM: —disorder needs to happen.

WC: That really is legal?

KM: Yeah, yeah. I mean if they're discovered to have been using certain substances, and in some cases alcoholism, or coming to work drunk, all of those things, right, are terms for—

WC: I understand that. You know, coming in—

KM: Yeah.

WC: Wow!

KM: Terms for firing on the spot so—

WC: Yeah I remember—

KM: Various practices, yeah.

WC: I remember years ago people saying that you're supposed to compartmentalize your life. Okay, so here is your personal life, your relationships, here's your spirituality, here is your career, and keep all those areas separated and divided and I was always like, "Um, so in other words, I'm supposed to leave my soul at home when I go to work?"

KM: [Laughs]

WC: How do you do that?

KM: Yeah, it's like, *Be a robot when you walk through this door and then you can go back to being a person when you leave.* So, yeah, I think there's been movements over the last, I'd say like 10 to 15 years, where you've seen employee resource groups for various religions coming to the workplace, too, and this idea that, okay, let's find other like-minded people in our company to connect with, and that's gone across sexual orientation and religion and now in some amazing examples like Salesforce, they have a SOBERforce group, so employee resource groups for individuals in recovery, which I think is such a cool thing. And something Recovery Friendly Workplace is on the path to normalizing.

WC: Wow, you know one of my mentors, Marianne Williamson, used to say that every business is a front for a church, and when she said that she wasn't talking about a religion, so to speak. A church is a place where people can go. It's a safe place, so I can go into that building or I can go to that congregation, pull off the religious aspect if you need to, but that's a place where I'm safe, where I feel loved, where I feel accepted, where I feel like I belong. And she said that every business is a front for a church, so a pizza parlor is a front for a church. A hair

salon is a front for a church. Where, gosh, I go there and, yeah, I'm receiving these services or I'm buying these products but when I'm here, for some reason I just feel better about myself. I feel like they love me and they—

KM: Mm hm.

WC: —protect me and I belong here. And every business can be that way.

KM: Yep. Community belonging, it like becomes your family. And, I mean, with the work-from-home kind of remote business, hell, I'll say *trend* but really like overtook everything in 2020, that's become even more important. It's like you spend so much of your time with those that you're working with via Zoom, Hangouts, whatever it may be, and you want to find more ways to connect, and conversations like this really open the door.

WC: When people say that there's a stigma with mental health and wellness, describe for us in your words what does that stigma look like? What does that mean?

KM: Yeah, and sometimes outwardly is still occurring and sometimes the fear of the reaction is what's holding people back from sharing. I do think, more and more, the conversation around mental health has become louder especially these last few years, pre-pandemic. When I said I worked on mental health people would be like, "Oh, that's really nice, you're helping with mental illness," not realizing that this is for everybody. Everybody needs to keep mentally fit and care about their mental health just like their physical health, so that's become more normalized. But I think the stigma that surrounded it is exactly this idea that you need to be all on, all the time, and keep your problems to yourself. And even in many families who didn't really discuss emotions much growing up, I know a number of families, even in my personal circle, who don't talk about emotions, don't talk about mental health, and would be—I won't say outraged but would be very unhappy to hear that anyone in their family was going to therapy, as if it's a stain on the family. You know, that something wasn't perfect, that they needed help just to stay grounded and that they couldn't do it themselves. As if that's some moral failing to not be able to go through it alone. But yeah, my belief is just nobody should go through this alone and going to see a therapist in hard times: great. But going to therapy all the time: awesome! You know, it's just a good check-in to have somebody else to go through this wild life that we live and—

WC: Right.

KM: —all the experiences that come with it. Yeah, I think it's just a changing of times of being able to discuss it without fear of judgement in society.

WC: Before we move on from this topic, can you send out just a final message—well, not a final one because I have a whole bunch of questions, but just a message to leaders, to entrepreneurs, to business managers of just the value of being transparent and how attractive that is. Oftentimes as leaders, what we share is our victories, what we're so good at, our money, our accolades, all the things that we've accomplished. But we edit the part of when we fell down, of when we screwed up, of when we got it wrong and had to get back up and dust ourselves off and change directions and get new mentors and go to therapy and learn something new and—

KM: Mm hm.

WC: And really apply ourselves and start all over, if that's what it took. And yet I think that those stories of transparency, those are the stories that truly, truly attract a following. People who want to belong to an organization that's making a difference.

KM: Yeah.

WC: And that's a for-profit organization. So, just a final message on that topic.

KM: Yeah, I mean it's like you said. It's being real. It's like people want to be around someone and something and a movement that is real. And vulnerability is hands-down the most powerful tool I have to attract and retain the most incredible talent and excite them about what we're working on and have them know that they're working for a real person who goes through ups and downs. And I've cried in an all-hands meeting before. I've shared—we do a Mental Health Monday post in our slack every week, so internal communication, and everybody shares one high and one low from their last week each Monday and I go full-on. And my husband as well, who's co-CEO with me. Even more stigmatized perhaps is a male sharing emotional hard times and he's opened up with the team many times, too. So, it's just really cool to see what happens when you foster it from the top and then you watch the other staff be able to share what's really going on in their life and reach out and support them. And it's how family should be and, like I said, work is really your family so building a strong, powerful, for-profit team, like you mentioned, who's going to work harder than ever, it has to start with some vulnerability and really growing a closer, more meaningful connection with your staff.

WC: That's incredible. Okay, let's talk about being an entrepreneur. You were talking about the things that you struggled with in high school and being a perfectionist and that you were so hard on yourself. And I'm wondering how many of those

traits, things that you struggled with, now serve you well today. Because I always like to tell people that ADD has been very, very good to me.

KM: [*Laughs*] Yes. I mean, I think the perfectionism is something I still struggle with and in many ways, like you said, it serves you and it sort of becomes this little cycle where it proves itself. Like I'm glad I was so over-the-top on all of these little details because then that's the feedback you got from customers, that those little details are what they loved. I have been, you know, I'll say obsessive over what I've created and down to every little detail, trying to make sure it all makes sense and all comes together with this one message and that we can have the best impact we can on our customers. The perfectionism is a give and take, especially with being an individual contributor at Intel. I went from solely individual contributions—I had managed a couple of interns before—to starting my own company, which of course in the beginning is like team of one and it's just me. As I started to get employees, I was very quickly shot into this CEO seat to be a team leader and to delegate and be able to use others' help and train and test and learn and have people grow into their roles with the company. It did take a lot of personal development over the last few years to be more comfortable and more supportive, knowing how to run a team and to be able to give away some of the control. I think at the end of the day perfectionism is being a bit of a control freak so entrepreneurship, there's some things I've kept on my own plate, figured out where my zone of genius is. What are the things that I need to keep in my wheelhouse, both for my own personal enjoyment because I love them—time's flying by when I'm doing it—but also to allow the team to support us and be able to do more. I can't do it all so it really does take a very small but mighty village.

WC: So, what advice do you have for young, aspiring entrepreneurs?

KM: I have a few tips. I think my first one is to never say no to an introduction. I think that's been one of the biggest things for me. Even meeting you, Winn, was an introduction from a friend of the past. And different connections I've made over the years that have said, "Oh, you've got to know so-and-so." And maybe at first glance you're like, "Why would I need to know them?" Sometimes I get a really off-the-wall intro and I can't quite see the why but I take it. Even a 15-minute call, as busy as you get, as big as the company grows, just never say no to an introduction because you don't know what could come from it. Another one is like stay focused on what makes you different. It's very easy as the years go on to get an earful of ideas every single day of what else you should be doing. Even today, I was just reading a comment from a customer saying like, "Make a gluten-free dough. Get with the program. Everyone's gluten free these days," and you know, it's like I have to stick to what makes us different. We are honestly standing out for not being a health food product. Like there are other healthy

cookie doughs that are gluten free and vegan and have adaptogens in them and it's just not going to be Doughp's thing. So, stay focused and that will help you grow. And my last tip would be in the vein of the conversation we've had here, like just be a good human in whatever you do. If you're going to build something off the ground or you do have something started, think about how it could be for more than just you and how what you've built could help serve others, both in what you talk about, what you donate to; you really have a platform when you have a company. It's a lot more than money.

WC: When did you make that decision: that it has to be more than just making money? Because what I find—I believe that the for-profit world could learn a lot from the nonprofit world and vice versa. The nonprofit world could learn a lot from running a legitimate for-profit business, meaning even in the nonprofit world, you need to spend money on marketing or find the best way to get the word out about your nonprofit organization and the work that your brilliant charity does, but you still got to fit within a budget. Donors are giving you money and they want to know that the money is going to where it needs to go and so, running a legitimate business with salaries and rent and all that is important. But in the for-profit world, what I find is that a lot of successful entrepreneurs, they just put their head down and they work and they work and they work and they work and 10 years later they bring their head up and think, *Wow, look how successful I am. I'm making a ton of money but I haven't done anything to give back. Now I need to give back.* And it sounds to me like you were already making that decision before you had a dollar in sales. You already knew that there had to be a purpose and that purpose was something greater than just making money.

KM: Yeah, I think some things that fueled this for me with what I've created with Doughp is coming off that career with Intel and I saw how Intel—though I can't say when they started their philanthropy, maybe it is one example you gave of a little down the road—but they do make just an incredible amount of money and on the same hand I saw so much of the philanthropy that they do. They in fact sent me—it was right after that Barcelona trip when I got sober, just about a week later I was leaving for the Philippines for two weeks for a volunteer project completely funded by Intel. And my job at the time, when I left Intel, was running a program to fight online harassment; working with other nonprofits using machine learning and just some incredible stuff from, again, like this tech company who could have just said, “Yeah, we sell processors, we do our thing, we don't need to worry about any do-good efforts.” And I was kind of getting my hands really like straight on what the world could look like. If a company like Intel can support it, maybe I can, too, when I start my own thing. So, when I started Doughp, the initial is like, *I love cookie dough, other people love cookie dough,*

let's see if I can make this a business. And within six months I started the Doughp for Hope Initiative. All of these ways that we have an impact today really started to come to life towards late 2017. It was my two-year sober birthday. That grand opening I mentioned, I had put on the Facebook invite: “If you come up and say, ‘It’s Doughp to be sober,’ to celebrate the founder’s two-year sober birthday, you’ll get 20 percent off.” And we were flooded with messages from people being like, “I’m a couple weeks sober. Do you know of any good meetings in the city?” Or someone saying—

WC: Wow!!

KM: —he was 13 years sober and had never told anyone. And I was just like, this is it. Like this is what we need to do, this is what we need to talk about. I got my frickin’ megaphone and I haven’t stopped talking about it since.

WC: Oh my gosh, I got goosebumps with that one.

KM: Mmm. Yeah, it’s so impactful and the messages like that don’t stop. Over these years, it’s like that’s what keeps me going as an entrepreneur. I almost can’t imagine running this company without a mission because it is so hard. You’re on the ground in tears once a quarter, at least. Something feels like it’s just fully crashing down but you pick yourself up and you keep going because of the impact you’re having. I have a little folder of all the emails and messages from people who—we’ve touched them. And Expo West, another example there, getting to see that human impact of our mission. I had someone come up and say how she and her boyfriend are big fans of Doughp. “It’s his three-year sober birthday today, would you film a video message for him?”

WC: Wow!

KM: “We just love you and love what you’re doing and so will you film this message?” And he ended up emailing us just a couple of days ago saying how much the video meant to him and he’s watched it a million times, he said. It’s just really cool to know that like we’re really making something happen and like these hard days are worth it because there’s one more person like Josh out there who just hit his three-year birthday that we could touch and let him know he’s kicking butt and to just keep going.

WC: You know, you mentioned the one person who had 13 years of sobriety and had never told anybody. To be able to give people permission, where you create that safe place, you bring up the conversation and the conversation of mental health and addiction and whatever it looks like, and you could describe it because

mental illness has many, many faces. But for you to open up the dialogue and you give people that safe place to talk about it, absolutely can be life changing.

KM: Mm hm.

WC: You also said the word that you wanted to have a mission, and I like that because a lot of people they just have a job, a job for a paycheck. I gotta pay the bills and so I show up. I like to tell that joke, this woman is giving a tour of her business, of her store, and the person asks, “So, how many people work here?” and the business owner responded with, “Oh about half; about half work here.”

KM: [*Laughs*]

WC: And the reason why that happens is because people aren’t engaged. They’re engaged with their time, meaning they have a job, they need the paycheck, they gotta pay the bills. So, they’re physically there but they’re not there with their passion, with their creativity, with their teamwork, with their hearts—

KM: Mm hm.

WC: —with everything else that they have to give. And oftentimes when people are not engaged, what do we want to do? We just want to fire them. You know, you can’t fire your way into building a better team of people. And I think how you build a wonderful team of people is that you give people permission to bring all of this. You know, I’m not a compartmentalized individual. I have many assets, many facets of who I am and what makes me me. And to know that I can bring all of that with me into the workplace and that I’m honored, that I’m celebrated; that’s powerful in a company.

KM: Absolutely! I mean—and it goes both ways. It’s amazing for the employer to have a team that’s so excited and that’s amazing to give opportunities to those who need it, like the second-chance employment aspect; something else we got from the Recovery Friendly Workplace. We helped a gentleman who’s coming out of rehab and needed to get a job and he is—our fulfillment center manager was just telling me yesterday how he is hands-down like her son now. She’s like, “I would do anything for this kid. He’s really trying to get his life back on track and he’s just been the best hire we could have ever found.” And he’s so excited to have the opportunity. It’s just a beautiful thing, what happens when you’re okay with everybody and their lives, bumps and all, and you know that they’re going to do something great if you give them a chance.

WC: That's awesome. I have to say, you speak really, really well and is that trained or did it just come natural to you? And I bring that up because I know some incredibly smart, smart business people but they don't speak well.

KM: Mm.

WC: So they stumble when they get in front of their own team members to talk about the vision of the company, what's going on. And I'm always challenging business entrepreneurs to become motivational speakers because when you can move an audience, that's powerful. Did you get training for that?

KM: I did not but I really thank you for saying that. That's so kind of you. I just have always loved to speak. Even when I was little. My parents used to joke that I was going to run for president one day. That dream has very quickly faded but I just was always a really outspoken little girl and was in like poem reading competitions in school, did like all the narration for the play. I'd always volunteer to be the narrator and then when I got into college presentations and whatnot, I just loved it. I really loved speaking to crowds and hope to be a public speaker, motivational speaker one day, when I have a bit more time on my hands. One year when—

WC: In your spare time—

KM: Yeah.

WC: —you're going to be a motivational speaker. Okay, there you go.

KM: Yeah and even in small form, I love it. I've been hired to do a few small things, even over Zoom; just different companies and teams and it's just great. I love being able to share my story and I'll scream it from any rooftop. Someone just has to let me come on their rooftop and tell it.

WC: Oh my gosh, well, that's what I've done so I can't wait to take this to other opportunities and venues to share you and your voice and your passion. That's incredible.

KM: Thank you, Winn.

WC: You know, you said you were an outspoken little girl. Before our daughter was born—she turns 10 in a couple of weeks—before she was born we said, yeah, we want a little girl that has a voice and that's outspoken and that speaks her mind and guess what? We've got one and every day it's like, oh my gosh, why did we let this girl have a voice?

KM: *[Laughs]*

WC: It's pretty funny. She negotiates everything. Everything is a negotiation; it's hilarious.

KM: I love it. That's awesome.

WC: It's what—

KM: You taught her well.

WC: —we want but it's, man oh man, okay. I can't believe we have to start wrapping this up. So, I asked you what your core values are and you shared with me three of them. One is to be a pathfinder. What do you mean by that?

KM: Mm, this idea that there are no obstacles in life, just new paths forward. We were just going through that this week. We're about to launch at Costco and the master case supplier just dropped the ball; didn't show up on Tuesday that was supposed to happen. And we had to essentially go out to our LinkedIn audience and I said, "Emergency mode, who can help?" I'm not going to let this stop me. We even got a comment from someone saying, "There's no way that you'll be able to get this order in a few days with the custom print and perforation, etc." And I said to myself, I literally thought of this statement, like this is not an obstacle I just need to find a new path forward. And sure enough, we've got someone who just ran a 24-hour print job; worked overnight to get us 1,600 boxes and they'll be delivered on Saturday. I just find a way. Nothing can stop me. There's just a new path we've got to find.

WC: Oh my gosh, that's your next motivational seminar right there. Be a pathfinder.

KM: [*Laughs*] I love it.

WC: That message alone. Your second core value that you shared with me is to spread joy. What do you mean by that?

KM: Just everywhere. This is a core value even of Doughp's. Everywhere, every interaction, whether it's around the product or a conversation we're having, I just want to make the person I'm talking to leave a little bit happier than how the call started. Spread a little bit more joy and hope and inspiration in everything I do. So, I just try to keep my smile on, vulnerability open, and spread some joy and have meaningful conversations everywhere I go.

WC: I love that. Well, you're selling cookie dough, so that makes it a little bit easier.

KM: It's a sweet start.

WC: But I'll tell you something: when I go to my dentist I leave there more joyful—

KM: [Laughs]

WC: And I hate going to the dentist but there's just something from when I'm greeted to everybody that I am connected with there in that dental office, I leave there more joyful so, there you go.

KM: I love it [laughs], even in the most challenging of circumstances there's a win.

WC: Exactly. And then the third core value that you shared with me is to be a good person: building a business to help others.

KM: Yeah, good for you, good for everybody else. It's like it's the only way I see it possible to make it through how challenging this journey is, is to know that you are doing it for more than just yourself. So, be a good person. It's good for business.

WC: Well, before we wrap things up tell us about Doughp for Hope.

KM: Yeah, so Doughp for Hope is really the initiative that I started in 2017 to try and wrap together our goal of breaking the stigma around mental health and addiction recovery. We have one portion for our community, so we share on social media Mental Health Mondays: we do a little email blast always bringing up this conversation loud and proud for coworkers. So this idea of inside the company, the Recovery Friendly Work Initiative and what we've done there, and for nonprofits like She Recovers Foundation. We donate one percent of all of our sales companywide to She Recovers; there's been more than \$60,000 donated to this cause in the last two years alone. We're really excited about the impact we can have financially, too, to help a wheel that's already in motion just go faster.

WC: Kelsey, you are incredible. I know people are going to love this interview. Again, you speak well. You have great, great business advice, leadership advice, all wrapped up into a cookie dough company that has a mission and has a purpose and so, Kelsey, just thank you so much. And how can our listeners find out more information about you?

KM: Awesome, Winn. Thank you for the kind words and for having me on. It's really an honor to share my story with your audience. I appreciate that. If anybody wants to connect with me I am Kelsey Moreira, it's M-O-R-E-I-R-A, on LinkedIn; very active on there so come over and follow what's going on there; @doughp on Instagram. And of course if you are hungry after this interview just doughp.com and you can get some cookie dough. Thanks again, Winn. You are the best, appreciate you.

WC: You're amazing and I have to do a shout out to our very dear friend, Dr. Sue Swearer.

KM: Yes.

WC: University of Nebraska. She's the one that made the connection for us and I love that woman. The work that she does, oh my gosh.

KM: She is amazing. And funny enough it connects back to when I mentioned the Hack Harassment Program I was working on at Intel, that's where I met Sue. She was advising from a clinical standpoint, a psychologist standpoint, on how to address online harassment. Love that I got to meet her through my days at Intel and then she actually helped us with our Doughp for Hope pledge and some other mental health stuff we've sent out through Doughp. So, she's been a great, great person in my life.

WC: Oh, just the work that she does surrounding antibullying initiatives, and she also worked with Lady Gaga on her Born This Way Foundation. What a great lady so, Sue, if you're listening to this, Kelsey and I love you.

KM: We love you! *[laughs]* That's awesome.

WC: Thanks, Kelsey. You're amazing.

KM: Thank you, Winn. Have a Doughp day *[laughs]*.

WC: I love that.