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Sheila Long: Hello, everybody. Welcome to the Head of The Table podcast. My name is Sheila Long and I will be your host for today's show.

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Sheila Long: I have a wonderful guest, one of our MalamaDoe members, Iman Khan. Welcome to the show, Iman.

Iman Khan: Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate this, especially now. You know, just finding different ways to connect.

Sheila Long: Yeah, it's great. We're all having to like pivot and adapt, right?

Iman Khan: We sure are, when our brains are growing even though it's uncomfortable, so if we keep trying to find the silver lining in it all that we're learning some pretty cool things.

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Sheila Long: Yeah. All right. So why don't you tell us about your company?

Iman Khan: Yeah. So my company, Blooming Minds, really evolved from a place of wanting to focus on re-educating culture and society on mental health and de-stigmatize it. Really move to a place that is more focused on not the one-size-fits-all which I think mental health was born out of that whole disease model, but really, to focus on the individual rather than their diagnosis.

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Iman Khan: And so, that is really where I developed this idea to move towards providing that kind of care towards people and then workshops and seminars that educate people on looking at the whole person rather than just what we have viewed in the past as broken.

Sheila Long: That is really cool.

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Thank you so much for doing that.

Iman Khan: Well, thank you. I want to say that I'm not alone in this. There are definitely other people out there that are aligning with that mission to really create a different way of going about things because I think all of us are human and I think that that's really the piece that I found, you know, definitely within the last year to be really focused on that. Ultimately, you know, the way that life is, we have pushed away parts of our humanness.

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You know, whether it'd be like, for instance, you know, women in the workforce, you know, if you cry, you're weak, you know. Or if you're too firm, then you're, you know, an explicitive that we won't say.

Sheila Long: Yeah.

Iman Khan: And so, I think instead of just learning how to embrace all of our emotions and understand that emotions really are a physiological process of learned behavior.

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So we have a chemical reaction in our body that we've learned in a specific experience.

And so, when we understand that, again, now we're talking, you know, just really basic, from a science perspective. An emotion lasts for about an hour and then above and beyond that, if it continues to last, it's really our cognition. It's our minds and our thoughts that are contributing and causing suffering. So if we can begin to understand that all of the emotions, anger, all of them, are just that learned experience within our body, we can just feel them, accept them, and learn how to manage them in a different way rather than repress them, suppress them, and make some of them bad and some of them good.

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Sheila Long: That is really cool. We trained our members yesterday actually on kind of this very topic like how to care for yourself and then we were talking about mindfulness and how you just need to accept these emotions.

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But I am so not a coach, so I'm there like trying to train. It was our member, Therese. He gave us like a handout that she had to call. So I'm trying to coach like, "Emotions are bad." But yeah, you said it so much better.

Iman Khan: Well, I -- well, again, thank you. I think we're all -- it's like a practice, you know, and I think that that's the other thing in mental health that we don't teach enough. And I have been trying to even use different language so, you know, rather than mental health, you know, mind help because mind, body, all of that is all connected.

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Iman Khan: And as soon as we introduce the word mental, I mean, again, you know, those of us who have been around for a while, I mean, there's all sorts of different, you know, connotations and terrible things that have been said and used with that word.

So I think mindfulness is, you know, such a beautiful practice because it teaches -- I know it changed my life when I started to practice and get trained in it and really started to drive practice in a different direction because it helped you understand that when we remove the judgment out of the process, meaning, you know, I'm having this experience and now I'm adding judgment to it and I'm trying to analyze it and take it apart, we were just -- we're not able to have the experience move through us.

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Iman Khan: So it kind of stays stuck. So, you know, right now with all of this COVID going on, we -- you know how I envision it?

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I'm very much a visual person.

Sheila Long: Okay.

Iman Khan: I envision. I'm not a gambler. But you know that Russian roulette game where the ball is like spinning around and then it drops into, oh, you know, drops into a little groove and one of the -- I feel like that's what we're in right now. Like we keep spinning around and then we drop for a little bit and then something causes us to spin around again and then we drop because there's just so many different experiences that we have not had and they're unfamiliar to us and we just -- we don't know how to adjust.

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Iman Khan: And so, sometimes you just have to, you know, I did a -- I think I posted a meme the other day of a roller coaster who just said, you know, "Buckle in." Because I mean, what else can you do? You just got to try to enjoy the ride and find the learning as best as you can.

Sheila Long: That is so true and it just really depends on your experiences. I think it's easier being older because like you've gone through so much already like -- especially when I talk to, you know, people over the age of 65.

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Sheila Long: Like they're like, "Oh, yeah. This kind of sounds familiar." But --

Iman Khan: Sure.

Sheila Long: Yeah. I don't know younger people are -- they adapt easier, too. So who knows?

Iman Khan: They do. They do. I -- you know, like you said, I think there are so many different variables to consider. You know, people -- I travel back and forth to New York a lot. So, you know, obviously, I have not been there since the end of February and I just think about all of the homeless people that I passed on the streets, you know, all of just -- the people that are so used to this hustle and bustle lifestyle and now, you know, have one of the biggest, you know, challenges in -- on their hands is really to adapt to life that's completely foreign to what they have experienced and that's tough.

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It's -- it is a tough situation.

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Sheila Long: It is and it kind of -- I was thinking about that too where that you kind of have the haves and the have nots.

Iman Khan: Mm-hmm.

Sheila Long: And I was like, "Just go back to your house." And then, you know, what is your house -- it's just -- some people, it's easier to go back to their house. And then like the homeless person, like they don't have a house.

Iman Khan: Right.

Sheila Long: And you just have to sit there and try not, you know, talk to anyone, talk to anyone. Like it's so not how we're -- like you were saying about your physiological experience.

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It's so foreign, but it's -- it is kind of nice. You just can't really -- you can just read and catch up on things you never had time to do.

Iman Khan: Right. Well, you know, it's funny because one of my colleagues posted -- you know, memes are like so popular these days and even more so, and he posted something to all those things, all that spring cleaning that I said, you know, I didn't have time to do. Well clearly, that wasn't the excuse because I'm still not doing it.

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Sheila Long: Yeah. That's so funny.

Iman Khan: Yeah.

Sheila Long: Yeah. Like I was sewing and then my kids, they've all taken sewing. Like okay. It's still there. Oh, but okay. We'll see how long it lasts, right?

Iman Khan: Yes, this is true. I'm really interested --

Sheila Long: You go ahead.

Iman Khan: Oh, I'm sorry. I was just going to say I'm really interested, you know, from a -- just curiosity standpoint.

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How is this going to affect us after it's all over and, you know, what things are going to change in terms of how people interact with each other? Like, you know, I'm a hugger. Like do our -- are people not going to want to hug and they, you know, the whole hand shaking thing because we've heard about that so much in the news, you know. Are people going to not make hand shake? I don't know. It will just be very interesting to see.

Sheila Long: I think people will maybe re-assess their values on materialism, too.

[0:10:02]

Iman Khan: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Sheila Long: And I remember just talking to a -- like someone who I knew, an acquaintance who was raised by her grandparents who went through the Great Depression and she's like we are so -- we just never learned to really value material possessions because they -- of what they went through. But hopefully, this will be over soon and we will be completely altered.

Iman Khan: Yes. Yes.

Sheila Long: But regarding the like hugging thing, I think it's funny how -- not funny.

[0:10:33]

It's interesting. I think it's interesting how Spain and Italy, they do like the kisses on the cheeks and so does France.

Iman Khan: Oh, yes, that's true. I never thought about that.

Sheila Long: Yeah. Where like in the US, like the hand shake --

Iman Khan: I know, right?

Sheila Long: Like I think Paris is three kisses on the cheek, like okay. They're --

Iman Khan: Well, and there's no asking permission. I mean, I learned over the years to, you know, ask for permission rather than invade someone's space.

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But, you know, there, no one's really asking permission. They just grab onto you and they're just bringing in the love.

Sheila Long: Yeah, they love pushing too, you know. It's a lot more like physical. So like --

Iman Khan: Yes.

Sheila Long: Yeah, we're -- yeah. Maybe we should. That would be a fun, you know, some session we could do and have a good table. People come in different cultures all the way after this is all done.

Iman Khan: That's a great idea. Yeah, that would be really cool.

Sheila Long: So how was your business adapting with COVID1-9?

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Are you changing things?

Iman Khan: Well, I -- interestingly enough, I did have some experience already with virtual sessions and just doing virtual coaching just because of my travels and my clients, you know, that are in New York. So I was already doing that. I would just, you know, everything now has shifted completely to virtual and I guess for me, what I'm noticing is just -- it's a different kind of energy exchange when you're working with someone virtually and it's definitely not something that I would prefer 100% of the time.

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I think it's -- I really got to pay attention, you know, more so than I've ever had which -- not that I'm not paying attention when people are present, but it's when someone's in front of you, you know, that -- again, when you think about energy, that energy is right there. It's just really engaging. When you don't have -- when you have that barrier, it's just a different feeling.

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And again, this is just my perspective, but I definitely know enough about myself to know that, you know, I could not have a relationship that would only exist on, you know, virtual platforms and text messaging, that's for sure.

But, you know, people, I can honestly say that it's a beautiful thing to see my clients saying, "You know what? I'm doing okay" because, you know, they were surprised, but I said to them, "Look, you've been practicing this before."

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This is all about perspective shift, you know, and it's about trying to turn the way you're looking at something and try to look at it differently which is really what this work and personal development is all about. It's knowing who you are, you know, really identifying what's important to you like your values and finding them and then, you know, learning about yourself in a very compassionate, again, non-judgmental harsh ways so that you can figure out how to, like you said earlier, pivot.

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So I've been pleasantly surprised to hear, you know, people have not had too many moments go into the dark side. They've just been kind of, you know, doing the same work they were doing before.

Sheila Long: Way to go. Congrats. That must feel awesome, you know, just to know you really laid that groundwork.

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Iman Khan: Well, you know, that -- again, that's such a beautiful thing and I wish I could accept that, but I feel like I'm just the -- I helped plant the seeds, it's really the clients that are doing the work. And so when someone says to me, "Thank you so much, you changed my life." It's not -- again, yes, I understand I'm a part of the formula but it's really -- you know, someone could come to me and not do any work and they're not -- nothing's going to change. So it's really the client who's doing the work and I -- I'm just -- I'm honored to be a part of that process because it really is a beautiful thing. It really is.

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Sheila Long: Awesome. So how are you different than a coach? Like I heard you're helping them to find their values, so we have a lot of like business coaches who've come through MalamaDoe. I think we had four at one time but like --

Iman Khan: You know, that's a great question. I don't -- I don't even -- I rarely call myself a psychotherapist. If -- I mean I only do it so that people understand that I'm licensed but a lot of work that I do is just about people.

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It's about helping people to gain a level of self-awareness and that's why Blooming Minds focus so much on the person not on the diagnosis. If I didn't have to diagnose people, you know, some people want to use their insurance and I do accept some insurance right now in my practice. I don't know if I always -- if that will be a constant going forward because there's a lot of constraints that come.

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And I think -- I just -- I feel like I'm someone who is just here to help people understand themselves and really see themselves like clearly and fully and accept those pieces -- all pieces, so that they can decide, you know what, this works for me and I like that or this part of -- this doesn't work for me anymore. That it did in the past and it doesn't now. So whatever you call that, whatever term that is, that's what I am. I'm not -- I haven't really found a word, yet, so if you got one, let me know.

[0:16:01]

Sheila Long: Yeah, I think it's maybe just therapy versus coaching.

Iman Khan: Yeah.

Sheila Long: Where like you really understand the brain. I forgot that you're a psychotherapist. Yeah, that's completely different.

Iman Khan: Yeah, I love the brain. I think the brain is fascinating. It's just a really cool -- and it's also -- I feel like it really helps people understand themselves in a way that's different than --

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You know, I'm a very sensitive person, so when I started to understand that, oh, my brain is doing what it's supposed to do rather than getting all caught up in all of these, you know, narrative that we developed. It just -- it helps to give you more of that observer perspective rather than constantly personalizing everything.

Sheila Long: Yeah, that is really cool when you do understand like this is just how my brain works.

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And I think it helps, you know, from a non-therapist perspective. Just helps like with less name calling and just understand people work differently.

Iman Khan: Yes, exactly. And you know --

Sheila Long: Yeah. So, go ahead.

Iman Khan: Yeah. Yeah, I was just going to say, in my experience, I feel like almost always -- I mean, unless there's been like a significant amount of trauma and even then -- like even then, what works back then for people to keep themselves safe, you know, doesn't necessarily work in the future anymore.

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But I feel like when it gets in people weigh the most is also one of their biggest like defining assets of who they are and it's just that you have to learn how to direct it and manage it in a way that works for you rather than against you.

Sheila Long: That is really cool. That really is what defines people. Like some people, they talk a lot or some people are quiet or whatever, you know.

Iman Khan: Right.

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Sheila Long: More reflective, and you can really frame it different ways but you just have to accept who you are.

Iman Khan: Well, and I think with mental health specifically, it was rooted in a disease model. So we have pathologized who people are. But, you know, you talk a lot? Well, then that must mean blah, blah, blah. You have -- you swing from this emotion to that emotion, and I work with a lot of creatives and that emotional energy that has labelled as bipolar?

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I mean that drives a creative process. Now I'm not saying all artists are, you know, anything. It's just I'm trying to explain that because label sometimes -- even introvert, extrovert. It can really hitch and hold people into thinking of certain way about themselves, whereas if we could just erase all of those and just help people understand themselves, yes, in a relational way because that's kind of how our minds are wired.

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We need to relay things but not necessarily in a rigid way, just in a way that says, oh, I see, you know, this is how and why I developed in this way and this is what I need to do to make it work for me rather than against me.

Sheila Long: That is really cool. I know you don't want to hear a thank you because you're just planning things but I think it just makes for a better world like helping people understand themselves.

Iman Khan: You know what? I will accept thank you.

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Sheila Long: Okay. All right. Yeah. Thank you. Is there anything you wish you would have known when you would have known when you started out? Like how many years have you been -- have you had Blooming Minds?

Iman Khan: I officially had Blooming Minds since 2012. And I would just say like this collective, you know, MalamaDoe has -- I mean, I only just recently as you know found you.

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But collectives and working together especially as women has been -- I wish -
- I wish I would have had that earlier but I think our society has evolved in a way that has allowed for more of that to happen. And especially for women because women have been -- I feel like, you know, society has pitted us against each other and I never understood that as a -- even as a kid.

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I mean, I just never really understood why women were so mean to each other and not helping one another. So I think that, you know, in a long winded way, to answer your question --

Sheila Long: Oh, I love talking about it.

Iman Khan: That's what I wish I would have -- I would have not -- I just wish I would have had access to that and known that that was -- because it's powerful when you get people working together. I mean, collaborations can be powerful things.

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Sheila Long: That's what we're trying to do, just to get people to like -- to see one another as role models. And there's so many different ways we can be role models.

Iman Khan: Well, and, Sheila, I will tell you, you are a master at that. Like that is your gift at the way that you can bring people together and introduce people and connect people and promote people with such enthusiasm and like authentic passion. It really is, so thank you. Now my --

Sheila Long: Thank you, Iman. That's really great, right? I appreciate that.

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Sheila Long: I like love it though. Like last night, somebody wanted an introduction to Zena, she makes these still boat -- steel toed shoes. So then I actually remember when she started, she had the idea. So I introduced because her daughter wanted an internship then I found out they had this amazing background in shoes. Like I had no idea.

Iman Khan: Wow.

Sheila Long: Yeah, but --

Iman Khan: That's so cool.

Sheila Long: Yeah, yeah. You just never know, so.

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It just makes for a better world when we all help each other. And the women against women thing, we just need -- I think, your business is really key, where you just understand where you're at and that can help.

Iman Khan: Yeah. And that whole abundance mindset.

Sheila Long: Abundance mind, there you go.

Iman Khan: Yeah. Just knowing that my successor, your successor or he, her, theirs, success is not take away from anybody else's. It's just the more people that are succeeding, the better because it's -- emotions are contagious.

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And so when someone is succeeding, that emotional energy contagion is powerful and why not spread that around?

Sheila Long: Okay. I agree. So Mother's Day is coming up, so we're trying to celebrate special women in our lives. Do you have a story about your mom that can inspire us for Mother's Day?

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Iman Khan: Gosh. My mom is -- I would say, both of my parents have raised me with an understanding of -- and that just modeling of helping people, just very compassionate, empathetic people. And my mom, I would say, was an entrepreneur before it became even cool to be one. When we were young, my father's parents had a few A&Ws.

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And so if anyone who's been around for a while, there was an A&W in Saint Francis.

Sheila Long: Oh, wow.

Iman Khan: And -- yeah. And my parents, they decided that they were going to try to run that business. My dad was a Milwaukee firefighter, so my mom pretty much ran the A&W when we were growing up.

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We were very, very young, we were all probably, gosh, I mean, my memory these days is pretty bad, but I would say we were all under 7. And my -- I have a brother and a sister and we're all two years apart, two, two-and-a-half

years apart. But she would have us in our -- bring our pajamas with us to the restaurant and change us. And so by the time we get home, we would -- she'd put us to bed.

So she just had such beauty and the way that she went about things and turns and still does with this compassion and drive and just lifting people and putting people first and putting us first.

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Sometimes at a cost to our self, which I think now she looks at me and my sister and just kind of smiles and thinks, "Wow, you girls just -- it's amazing what you all do." And I say to her, "Mom, you didn't realize you had that option, but yet you still modeled the same things for us, you just did it in a different way."

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Super strong lady. And if you ever meet her, she's petite, she's this beautiful, beautiful little woman and she is just strong and powerful and wonderful. So I have such great memories of those times of her just running the ship while my dad was off fighting fires.

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Sheila Long: That is really awesome. What a great story. Thank you for sharing.

Iman Khan: Yeah. You're welcome.

Sheila Long: You just never know how you impact people and so that is just great, just her taking you there. And you were just at the A&W the whole day while she was running it?

Iman Khan: And again I can't remember. I'm sure my mom would be able to give you more of the accurate thing, but I do know that we'd be driving back and forth and she would have things for us to do and just -- my mom really believed that old school mentality and idle mind is the devil's workshop.

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So she would always have us in physical work. Purposeful work, as long as we were busy, we were good, so we -- she definitely had us put to work and then as we -- not child labor of course but fun things.

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And then when it was time to go home and she just was a mom through and through. All those roles were being balanced which was -- I can't even imagine. I really can't. I mean, I'm trying to home school three kids, I mean,

and they're almost -- they're all teenagers and I'm like, "What the heck?" You really appreciate schools right about now at this time for sure.

Sheila Long: Teachers. Special place in our hearts for teachers.

[0:27:00]

Iman Khan: Exactly. Schools and teachers. I've always appreciated teachers and the administrators for what they do, but this was a whole different understanding like this is -- brings it to a whole another level.

Sheila Long: Yeah. Okay, all right. Well, thank you so much for being on our show and for telling us your story and sharing so much. You have such great insights.

Iman Khan: Well, thank you. I feel like living provides that learning if you're open to it. So I really do appreciate the opportunity of being a part of this and thank you.

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Sheila Long: So how can people get in touch with you?

Iman Khan: So my website is www.bloomingminds.org. If you go there, you can shoot me an email, my email -- there's a contact form you can reach me that way. My email address is iman@bloomingminds.org.

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Iman Khan: And if you Google me, there's LinkedIn, there's all of that, my information will pop up and I'd love to hear from you and find out what your goals are and what your ideas are and how you want to change your life, now is the time to do it. Everything is ending so might as well do it now.

Sheila Long: Yeah. And we're all starting over, so we're all pivoting and looking at the world differently, so you might as well understand your brain, right?

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And how it work and get some wonderful tools, so if something similar happens in five years, we're prepared.

Iman Khan: Yes, absolutely.

Sheila Long: Okay. All right. Well, thanks to you too for being on the show. It's always so much fun to talk you. You have such great insights.

Iman Khan: Oh, thank you, Sheila and it's a pleasure. You just -- it's rare to walk away from you not feeling like, "Wow, that felt really good." So thank you for that.

Sheila Long: Thank you. All right. Thank you.

[0:29:00]

Sheila Long: All right. And to our listeners out there, thank you guys for tuning in and for hearing on this great story about how Blooming Minds is really changing lives. And we look forward to hearing from you if you're interested in hearing more about being on Head of The Table podcast or MalamaDoe, please look us up online at M-A-L-A-M-A-D-O-E dot com, malamadoe.com. Thanks for tuning in everyone.

Thanks to everybody for listening to the Head of the Table podcast.

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Please feel free to look for us wherever you find your podcast, let your friends know as well. Thanks, everyone.

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