



## Episode 3: Kit, Part 1: Done With Doctors

### Introduction and Overview

Welcome to **Intersect**, a podcast for anyone in the business of health care who's committed to providing treatments and experiences that improve patient health.

This podcast tells stories of behavioral science in action. In each episode, we show how MicroMass uses behavioral science, creativity, and technology to solve challenges and create more ideal customer experiences.

Kit lives with an undiagnosed chronic illness. Frustrating experiences with healthcare providers have caused Kit to give up on finding a diagnosis and manage her symptoms on her own. When Kit and her wife Cassie decide to have a child, it's up to the MicroMass team to help her find a way to reconnect with the healthcare system.

#### **Key takeaways from this episode:**

- When patients lose trust or confidence in the healthcare system, they are more likely to abandon treatment and cut off contact with healthcare providers
- Many patients' distrust stems from poor communication between providers and patients
- Patients who have become alienated from the healthcare process often start to accept their symptoms as normal, and they live in denial about how their condition could affect their long-term health



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## Episode 3: Kit, Part 1: Done With Doctors

### Meet the Team

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#### **Mindy Vulpis, PhD** | Behaviorist

Figuring out how to help patients change their behavior to benefit their health can be a lot like the detective work of diagnosing a rare disease. In the case of behavior change, however, we search for clues in the enormous volume of published research on health conditions and behaviors. That's my favorite part of doing this work. I love leveraging scientific research, first to gain a deep understanding of what drives people to do what they're doing, and then to guide our strategy as we look to develop effective interventions.



#### **Kelsey Arp** | Lead Behavioral Copywriter

As a writer, I believe any story can be compelling, original, and authentic if it's done right. One of the best parts of my job is getting to learn something new every day: medical conditions, rare diseases, and most of all, learning about how people view themselves and the world around them. Diving into the perspective of someone living with a rare disease is eye-opening—you really start to see how frustrating it can be and how we can help fill some of the gaps.



#### **Lindsay Huey** | Senior Art Director

I enjoy creating solutions that are easy for people to use. Our work can change people's mindset and habits, helping them improve their quality of life or support others. I have had migraine headaches since 2nd grade, and they have been a constant struggle throughout my life. I can empathize with Kit because I've dealt with some of the same challenges with healthcare providers.



#### **Kristen Maynard** | Group Account Director

As someone who has had to advocate for her own health and appropriate testing in the past, it's really meaningful to me when we create initiatives that empower patients to be their own best advocate. Patients know more than anyone about what they're going through. When we bring an empowered patient together with a provider who acknowledges the patient perspective, we can improve the patient's experience and outcome and ultimately make a big difference in their care.



#### **Johnny Knight (host)** | Senior Behavioral Copywriter

I love talking with people to gain a deeper understanding of their experience and to learn what motivates them and how they view the world. I try to transform simple writing into meaningful moments of connection and growth. Story is my specialty.



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### Transcript

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#### ***Intersect: a podcast from MicroMass Communications***

*Episode 3: Kit, Part 1: Done With Doctors*

**JOHNNY:** Welcome to *Intersect*, a podcast for anyone in the business of health care who's committed to providing treatments and experiences that improve patient health. This podcast tells stories of behavioral science in action. In each episode, we focus on one person facing healthcare-related challenges, and a team of MicroMass specialists works to build them a more ideal experience. Sit back. Enjoy the story. Get to know our team and our process. Find out how our behavioral expertise and creativity can help change lives.

MicroMass Communications presents: *Intersect*

**KIT:** [ON WALKIE TALKIE] Chuck, come in.

**CHUCK:** [ON WALKIE TALKIE] This is Chuck. Go ahead.

**KIT:** [ON WALKIE TALKIE] What's the ETA for the replacement Fresnel for the grand ballroom?

**JOHNNY:** This is Kathleen. She goes by Kit. If you've ever been to a conference or an awards dinner, you've probably seen people like Kit lurking in the corners of the hotel or the convention center. She's the one who makes sure the lights and microphones are working and everything's where it needs to be before the event starts.

**KIT:** [ON WALKIE TALKIE] I'm stationed on the board today. Get Tim on the ladder if you can't do it yourself. And if you see him, make sure he's actually wearing his mask.

**CHUCK:** [ON WALKIE TALKIE] 10-4.

*Kit's phone vibrates*

**KIT:** [ON PHONE] Hey there.

**CASSIE:** [ON PHONE] Hey, how'd it go?

**JOHNNY:** The voice you're hearing on the phone is Kit's wife, Cassie.

**KIT:** Um, I... didn't make it.

**CASSIE:** [SURPRISED] Again? What happened?

**KIT:** It's just I couldn't get away from work. Things never really let up this morning.

**CASSIE:** Alright, um. I'm looking at the calendar... you've got next Tuesday and Wednesday off. I can give them a call right now and see if they can squeeze you in.

**KIT:** Yeah... I guess.

**CASSIE:** Kit, please make time for this. This is the second time you—

**KIT:** I know, I know.

**CASSIE:** I really need you to do this. We really need you to do this. I can set up an appointment with the fertility center, but until you find out what's going on...

**KIT:** [TENSELY] So if I go to this doctor, I get to go to another doctor?

**CASSIE:** We talked about this. It'll be worth it, won't it?

**JOHNNY:** Kit lives with a chronic illness. She's well aware of it—abdominal pain, nausea, muscle fatigue, back pain she's had since she was 14. The most maddening part of it all—her condition doesn't have a name. At least not one that Kit knows. She's never been successfully diagnosed. So on top of the chronic pain, she also lives with a larger sense of frustration that no one seems to be able to help her. Here's Kit at home, talking to us with Cassie.

**KIT:** I mean, the only thing that all the doctors agree on is that I have high blood pressure. Everything else, who knows? I'll be doubled over in pain for an hour and then suddenly, it's gone. Some days it's just like, "Oh hey, my left arm just went numb." Is that part of the same thing or is it something new? It's like... [SIGHS] when you hear about people living in a haunted house. Every now and then, chairs fall over by themselves, or sometimes it's more like nonstop screaming from the basement. And whenever it happens I'm like, "Is it real?"

**CASSIE:** Oh, it's real. I'm right there with you in that haunted house, and it's terrifying to watch.

**KIT:** But it's hard to wrap my head around. If I didn't live in my own body, I probably wouldn't believe it either.

**JOHNNY:** Most people hearing this probably think, "Time to go to the doctor." Well, Kit has. Many doctors. And she's basically decided she's never going back.

**KIT:** The doctors have no idea. They have guesses. It's always like, well, "Change your diet and reduce stress and we'll see." I always leave feeling more confused than before.

**JOHNNY:** Have you ever gotten any useful information from a doctor?

**KIT:** [LAUGHS] Sometimes. Usually it feels more like a wild goose chase. They hit me with a ton of questions, like I'm being interrogated, but it never goes anywhere. They're just grasping at anything. Remember the "sweetie" doctor?

**CASSIE:** Oh yeah.

**KIT:** "Hi sweetie. Oh, you're just the sweetest thing."

**CASSIE:** [LAUGHS]

**KIT:** And she meant well, she just had some questionable ideas about my diagnosis.

**CASSIE:** [LAUGHS]

**KIT:** [SARCASTICALLY] "Maybe being in a nontraditional relationship is adding to your stress." She actually thought that was a helpful thing to say. So. Anyway. I just quit going. Done. Done with doctors. Good riddance.

*Musical interlude*

**JOHNNY:** Kit's not alone in this. She's one of many people living with chronic, difficult-to-diagnose conditions who've resigned themselves to not knowing what illness they have. Because for them, that's easier than continuing to search and be disappointed.

**CASSIE:** Can I just say, I think the most important thing—and I can't stress this enough—it's legit. What Kit has dealt with in going to these doctors—it's not like she has an irrational fear, like being scared of creepy



## Episode 3: Kit, Part 1: Done With Doctors

### Transcript (continued)

clowns or something. I mean, if you were in constant pain and you had to go to a bunch of strangers who you hope have the knowledge to figure it out, and you open up, you put your trust in them, you give them your blood for God's sake. And every single time you come away feeling just, dismissed? Just like, "Well that was pointless." Wouldn't you feel like, "Maybe I shouldn't go back?"

I hate this for you so much. Kit's a doer; she doesn't shy away from anything. I've seen her crumpled up on the floor when she has to go to work—she picks herself up, takes some ibuprofen, and just powers through it. Nobody at work has any idea how much pain she's in. I just don't want anybody listening to think this is all in her head or that she's some kind of diva. She's a tough cookie.

**JOHNNY:** Here's where our work intersects with Kit's story. Our team of behavioral experts is not in a position to diagnose Kit's illness, but what we can do is help Kit find a way to re-engage with the healthcare establishment.

*Music picks up*

**JOHNNY:** At MicroMass, we bring together behavioral science, creativity, and the purposeful use of technology to help people lead healthier lives. On this episode, we're working to help someone who has disconnected from the healthcare system. How can we help bring Kit into a productive relationship with a healthcare provider to give her a chance at finding a diagnosis and treatment? How can we help her overcome her frustration, regain a sense of hope, and build the confidence to keep trying? At MicroMass, each team is made up of specialists with strong perspectives, diverse skill sets, and a common goal. Here's the team who will be working to help Kit.

**MINDY:** Hi, I'm Mindy Vulpis, a Behaviorist at MicroMass. Figuring out how to help patients change their behavior to benefit their health can often be like the detective work involved in diagnosing a rare disease. I love leveraging scientific research first to gain a deep understanding of what drives people to do what they're doing, and then to guide our strategy as we look to develop effective interventions.

**KELSEY:** I'm Kelsey Arp, Lead Behavioral Copywriter. As a writer, I believe that any story can be compelling, original, and authentic if it's done right. Diving into the perspective of someone living with a rare disease is eye opening. You really start to see how frustrating it can be, and how we can help fill some of the gaps.

**LINDSAY:** Hi, I'm Lindsay Huey, a Senior Art Director at MicroMass. I enjoy creating tactics that are easy for people to use. I've had migraine headaches since second grade, and they've been a constant struggle throughout my life. I can empathize with Kit because I've dealt with some of the same challenges she's having with healthcare providers.

**KRISTEN:** I'm Kristen Maynard, Group Account Director. As someone who has had to advocate for her own health and appropriate testing in the past, it's really meaningful to me when we create initiatives that empower patients to be their own best advocate. When we bring an empowered patient together with a provider who acknowledges the patient experience, we can improve the patient's experience and outcome, and ultimately make a big difference in their care.

*Musical interlude*

**JOHNNY:** And I'm your host, Johnny Knight. I'm a Senior Behavioral Copywriter at MicroMass. I write, I ask questions, I listen.

Back to the story. We're meeting Kit and Cassie at a turning point in their lives. They've been together for 5 years and recently, they've made the decision to become parents. As we mentioned at the top, Kit is an event production coordinator. Cassie's a realtor. Since COVID-19 hit, Kit's work has slowed down a lot, and Cassie's real estate sales have taken a slight hit as well. Both of them are contractors. They pay for health insurance out of pocket. They're considering a medically assisted pregnancy, and if that's the route they decide to go, they don't have the safety net of employer-based health coverage. It's a gamble. And of course, lingering over all of this is Kit's mysterious condition. Here are Kit and Cassie in their house. They're giving me the guided tour.

**CASSIE:** And this one, down the hall here, we're thinking about turning into the baby's room.

**KIT:** I don't know why you want to turn a perfectly good junk room into a nursery.

**CASSIE:** I'm telling you, you'll be happier building your stuff in the garage.

**KIT:** I have to move all this into the garage? I hope you're planning to help me with that.

**CASSIE:** Whatever it takes. I just want little Angelique to have this room.

**KIT:** Angelique? I thought we were going with Sage.

**CASSIE:** Sage, fine, I don't care. She's getting this room.

**JOHNNY:** So you two want a girl?

**KIT:** I like Sage as a boy's name too.

**CASSIE:** Honestly, we're probably going to go through 40 dozen names before we're even pregnant.

**JOHNNY:** Yeah. I know this is a personal question, but when are you two going to start that process?

**CASSIE:** Umm... soon?

**KIT:** Yeah, soon.

**JOHNNY:** And what's standing in your way at this point?

**KIT:** I don't do doctors. That's it.

**JOHNNY:** Is there any way you could have a kid without going to a doctor?

**CASSIE:** I mean, yeah, I guess it's possible we could. But even if I carried the baby or we adopt, we still want our kid to have 2 healthy parents.

**KIT:** Look, I'm healthy. I'm not overweight, I don't drink, I eat well. Cassie got me a water bottle that lights up to remind me to drink water all day.

**CASSIE:** Hydration, yes!

**KIT:** And you cook amazing Mediterranean food. I'm telling you, Cassie looks out for me. I'm good.

**CASSIE:** You're good?

**KIT:** Yes...

**CASSIE:** You want to tell him about what happened at work last month?

*Flashback to a scene at Kit's work*

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## Episode 3: Kit, Part 1: Done With Doctors

### Transcript (continued)

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**KIT:** Let's bring the level of 3 down to 60. Good. Go a little upstage.

**CHUCK:** [ON WALKIE TALKIE] How's that?

*Loud clattering sound*

**CHUCK:** [ON WALKIE TALKIE] Come in? Do you copy?

*Footsteps*

**CHUCK:** Woah, what happened? Is she OK?

*Present day in Kit and Cassie's home*

**JOHNNY:** What was it?

**KIT:** We don't know for sure. Probably a seizure. I didn't go to the doctor.

**JOHNNY:** Even after that?

**CASSIE:** I know, right?

**KIT:** I probably should do something about it. The owner of the event company, I've been working gigs for him for 10 years, but all of a sudden he's taken me off load-in on all of our events. He doesn't want me carrying anything, or up on any ladders, in case it happens again. The only reason he's still hiring me at all is because we've worked together for so long.

**JOHNNY:** I'm sorry.

**CASSIE:** And what about...

**KIT:** I know.

**CASSIE:** I mean, work is one thing but what if...

**KIT:** I know.

**CASSIE:** ...it happens while you're taking care of our baby?

**KIT:** [IMPATIENT] Of course I wish I could fix whatever's wrong with me, but what am I going to do? Go to every doctor in America just so they can tell me I have high blood pressure? I can't.

*Musical interlude*

**JOHNNY:** Alright, team. You've heard what Kit is up against—here's where we come in. We're working for a pharma company that has a focus on treating rare diseases. How can we reach a patient like Kit who has no interest in going to the doctor? She has checked out of the healthcare system. How can we remove some barriers and bring her back in?

To be continued. Join us for the next episode of *Intersect* as we dive into the behavioral approach to Kit's situation. What will our team of experts do to help Kit reconnect with the healthcare system, and how will Kit respond to it? In the meantime, to learn more about MicroMass and what we do, visit [micromass.com](http://micromass.com). Until then, I'm Johnny Knight. Talk to you soon.



## Episode 3: Kit, Part 1: Done With Doctors

### Special Shoutouts

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#### **Lindsay Jones (original music) | [Composer and Sound Designer](#)**

Based in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, and a native of North Carolina, Lindsay Jones is a Tony Award-nominated composer and sound designer for theater, film, and television. He is currently an adjunct professor at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. To hear more of his work, visit [lindsayjones.com](http://lindsayjones.com).



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