



Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:00:00] Hello and welcome to Unstress. My name is Doctor Ron Ehrlich. Now, before I start, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I am recording this podcast, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. We have much to learn from our First Nations people about connection and respect and 65,000 years. Well, I think that is impressive. We have a lot to learn from them. Well, I've explored the world of regenerative agriculture and environmental issues in various podcasts, and health, as well as diet and exercise, the impact of sugar, etc. but, my guest today has really gone out there and spread that message to literally millions of people. And I have to say, I have so admired his work for, over ten, for ten years now. My guest is [Damon Gameau](#). Now, Damon is a bit of a, as I said, a bit of a hero. He's now full time director since his success with [That Sugar Film](#) in 2014. And five years later, he made the film [2040](#). Now that sugar film, together with, Sarah Wilson, who was running the [I Quit Sugar](#) movement. And, I've had her on as a [guest](#) to talk about that. I mean, I've often said that both Damon Gameau and Sarah Wilson have done more for alerting people to the dangers of sugar than the dental industry, the dental profession have done in the last 70 years. And I'm not being critical of dental profession. I'm proud of the fact that for 70 years the profession has been talking about that. But in terms of getting the message out, I'm eternally grateful to Damon and Sarah for both, for both of those. Now, his wonderfully inspiring documentary 2040. Now if you haven't seen that, it is a must. It included also, as well as the film, an extensive impact campaign that is being seen by 1.5 million students, and they're being taught with curriculum materials. And it's also reached hundreds of farmers who have received assistance to switch to regenerative practices, plus the building of the first seaweed platform in Tasmania. And I believe there are eight seaweed farms going around Australia now as a result of that 2040 film. In fact, we hear so much about doom and gloom in the climate and what was so inspiring and empowering about that 2014 movie was it literally provided a vision of utilising practices that are available to us today to turn society and the environment around. Now, on the back of that, I think Damon was nominated for the New South Wales Australian of the year for his work in the regenerative movement, and he's the driving force

behind Regenerators and that can be found on the website theregenerators.org, where there are many areas of action that we talk about in this episode. His current film is called Regenerate Australia 2030. We've actually added the trailer at the end of this interview, and the film leverages storytelling, strategic partnerships, and targeted community outreach to harness an irresistible vision for a safer, fair, more resilient nation and create a powerful model for realising community driven solutions. Look, we've talked to [Helena Norberg Hodge](#) from [Local Futures](#), and this just dovetails so beautifully into this. And I would encourage you to go to that site, theregenerator.org and find out which area of action you are most interested in and would like to become part of. His latest project is Future Council, where he takes a group of children on a tour exploring issues about the future of our planet. I'm not going to spoil it. He shares some of that insight with us in this episode. It's a wonderful conversation. I hope you enjoy this conversation I had with Damon Gameau. Welcome to the show Damon.

Damon Gameau [00:04:25] Hi Ron, lovely to be here.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:04:28] Damon, I have so admired all of your work over the last ten years and, you know this. I think it's brilliant. There's so much I wanted to talk to you about today. There's so many things you're into that I'm also very passionate about. The first one, of course, was your 2014 film, That Sugar Film. And I, just before we came on, I mentioned that Sarah Wilson, who I quit Sugar Movement and you did more in those two movements than the dental profession did in the last 70 years. And we've been talking about it for 70 years. But you guys really nailed it, really made a difference. I'm going to sound like a director here. Damon. But what was the motivation and what was the key message apart from don't eat sugar?

Damon Gameau [00:05:14] Yeah. Well, the motivation was just, at the time how much confusion there seemed to be around that particular topic. That was very much, it felt like two sets of camps that were saying, hey, sugar is fine, don't worry about it. And then there was sort of that Sarah, [David Gillespie](#) kind of camp, which was saying no no.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:05:30] David I should acknowledge David.

Damon Gameau [00:05:32] Yeah. And so, yeah. And so I just sort of. Quite genuinely wanted to find out for myself because, my oldest daughter just been born and so embarked on this kind of experiment, not knowing whether anything was going to happen. And, so really shot at very low budget. It was a bit of a risk, I guess, just to see if sugar was going to impact my body. But then, given what it was doing to my body within just three weeks, that's when we realised that we had a bigger story and then applied for larger funding and went out to other people that we wanted to be in the film. So it all just kind of happened and unfolded, in the way that it did. And then, as you said, I think it took all of us by surprise how much the film resonated, not just in Australia, but around the world and with

school groups and policy in different parliaments, did screenings and change policy. And it was just a wild ride for me and really showed me how powerful storytelling is. As an agent for change. And that really, I guess, solidified me in wanting to tell more stories, but not just tell the story. Also, marry it to like an impact campaign so that people can feel a strong emotion when they watch the film. But then you give them tools to enact or transmute that emotion into some kind of change. Because I think that's what's been lacking. We often tell a story and people feel something so strongly, and then ten minutes later you're on Instagram or checking your emails and that feeling dissipated and we've lost that moment. So how do we capture people when they have that feeling and turn it into something tangible?

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:07:02] But I mean, the message was clearly that sugar impacts on our health. But here you were in 2014, learning that message. Many I mean, I don't know how old you were at the time, but there have been many years before that where that wasn't the public health message. And to this day, yeah. You know what? What did that teach you about public health messages?

Damon Gameau [00:07:27] Well, that it's complex, that I think, as we found even the last few years with any number of medical cases that have been presented to us as a society. It depends where you're reading, what you're looking at, who is influencing your decision making. It's, who's funding some of the sides. It's such a mess, you know? And I really feel for people right now, not just in sites but in any kind of key topic. We're so fragmented now, it's so hard to know where to get honest information or who to believe that we're really, you know, we're tribalism and we're kind of disintegrating some of our key pillars of democracy because we don't know how to collectively make sense of things anymore. And I think no more is that clearly articulated in the science field or medical field or what you should eat, what you shouldn't eat. And I think what that film taught me was all that journey was that, we are all very, very different human beings. And there's a number of factors that influence our health markers. And it isn't as simple as black and white. And that's why I think the film had a very strong message of saying, look, I don't personally think sugar is evil. I don't think we should brand it or something like that. But here's a film that shows you where it's hidden in foods that you might not be aware of. So now it's up to you. You now are empowered to make the decision about how much sugar you have, because I think at the time most people knew that there was sugar in a KitKat or a can of Coke, but they were less aware of the sugars in the yoghurts, in the muesli bars and things like that. So really, that's all my, the film tried to do. I think that's why it did connect. I certainly didn't want to preach to anyone. I just wanted to explain to them where the hidden sugars were found. And I think also what worked is that, you know, we tried to tell that story in a narrative that wasn't dry or, particularly academic. It was fun and playful and used all the colours and the aesthetic and tone of the sugary history themselves, to make it more appealing and for families to, to go on and see it together and then go home and check the pantries. So I think there was a number of factors that came together that made that film work, but it certainly changed my life and has led to some, you know, extraordinary conversations and meetings and experiences, in my life. So I'm incredibly grateful for and, and Sarah and David Wilson and lots of others. Obviously I just followed on the coattails of or enhanced or amplified their terrific work. But, you know, there's people still doing that right now.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:09:42] Yeah. Well, I think those three words you are empowered are really the powerful message above everything else. And, I, I should also acknowledge David Gillespie, who's been on this program as well. And I love his work. And same with Sarah as well. But, it's a story of influence on health care that is easy to miss, but once you hear it, very difficult to ignore. And that's from a health practitioner with 45 years of clinical experience. So, you know, anyway. But you then went on in 2019 to tackle an even bigger problem, and you came up with this fabulous film, I mean, 2040 I mean, honestly, we hear so much about gloom and doom, but this was so inspiring, so empowering, and it embraced existing solutions. And I know you've got this regenerator movement and we're going to talk about that. But knowing all you know now, what does regeneration mean to you?

Damon Gameau [00:10:41] So it's a massive question. Yeah. Okay. I think the simplest way to describe it would be that, you know, we are living in a degenerative economy right now and extractive, economy that is doing enormous damage to the planet, but also to our own health. And, you know, I think there's not there's actually a lot of similarities between Sugar Film and 2040, in the sense that they're both looking at. The architecture of a system that is producing these outcomes, whether it is type two diabetes or dental decay or it is, you know, ocean plastics or climate change, they're all coming from the same flawed architecture. And both those films are trying to address that at the very core is that, you know, this is a moment that we have to acknowledge that we have to change the system, and we have to move from one that is degenerative and doing damage to one that is regenerating and putting life back as the priority. Because this system doesn't prioritise life right now, whether it's human health or animals or plant life, it modifies those things in order to survive and keep going. And it's a rapacious growth machine that has to keep eating and will find any way it can, to extract more things. And that's just we all know how that's going to end. And I think we all intuit that we're coming to the end of a particular story of how we'd be living as human beings with each other and the planet. And so I guess the idea of regeneration is, what does that new story look like? What does it look like to actually value life, to value community, to value our health, to value our landscapes and our oceans and our water and our air? That is regeneration. And it is extraordinary how much of that is going on around the world, where people are stepping away from this old system and story and trying to embrace something. We don't hear about it because all our interaction and communication tools are designed for outrage. And so those good stories really don't get attraction that they deserve. But I've certainly spent the last 8 to 10 years looking at those stories and cannot help but be filled with, with hope. That's going to still be unravelling. There's still a letting go of this old story that we, I think we all feel we're going through right now. But certainly there's the seeds of something new that are sprouting everywhere around the world. And that's what gives me such excitement and gets me after every day, is that I get to go and speak to those people or tell still stories about those people and people are starting to do things really differently. And yeah, so that's, that's how I've just basically described regeneration. But I'd also say that a deeper level, it comes back to our self, how do we regenerate ourselves? Because we're not going to heal the planet or each other unless we look at regeneration within. It's probably a longer conversation, but I'd say that we've built an entire civilisation on a wound or a deep wound that happened probably 10,000 years ago when we firstly separated from nature. We went from hunter gatherer into sort of a modern agrarian culture, and suddenly it changed our dynamic with nature, especially in, you know, whipping and yoking and oxen

to plough a field so you could make, you know, more calories. And if you didn't do it, you never got more calories and you were at a disadvantage. But also, I think we went from abundance to a scarcity mindset at that same time. And the minute we went into scarcity, we developed ego and othering and hoarding and hierarchies and wars and separation. And that's the civilisation we've built off that deep wound. And so I think now of, you know, so many of our leaders, you know, I don't see them, for example, as men. I see a lot of them as wounded boys. They're operating from this deep wound that needs more and more. And \$1 billion isn't enough. I need \$10 billion. And that's an incredibly unhealthy, wound that's playing out. And yet we reward that. We make them president, we make them CEO, instead of saying, well, hang on a minute, like, is this actually what we want? Because if you look at all the hunter gatherer societies, anyone with that wound, any young male that showed a narcissistic trait or was bragging about the Big Hunt, was ostracised, remember, it was ridiculed, sometimes killed in the Lakota tribes. In other words, whereas we make them the king of the kingdom and let them set the rules of the game. So I think that's again, what regeneration means to me is how do we start to operate from a healed place and make decisions and design our buildings and our cities and our food systems from a place of a healed place, not from this world? And that's going to take a bit of work. And I think probably we're going to need to go even further down and be brought to our knees like we are in our personal lives before we make a big change like that. I think society's kind of on the cusp of something like that. I don't think, you know, it's going to be completely apocalyptic, but I think we do have to go a little further down the valley before we start coming out the other side again.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:15:23] Wow, that that is a wonderful summation of the last 10,000. Yeah. Well done. You. Well done. You. But I think you know, as somebody who's followed, influence of corporations on policy and I, and I'm following, you know, we're all following what goes on in America. It's probably the greatest show on Earth or the most terrifying show on Earth. But I heard Robert F Kennedy say something which I thought was really interesting, and that was that. Almost every product we buy, be it food, the clothes, be it anything, the cost to health and the environment is never factored in. It's never factored in. And societies left to carry the bill. And it makes such a compelling story of trauma and, you know, of threats, you know, there's a threat. There's a threat. How do we deal with that threat? Well, we do something to soothe ourselves. And ultimately that's soothing generally means buying something else. And we learned that doesn't work. So it's the influence of that message is and that's something that after the pandemic, even as somebody who's followed this for 40, 30 or 40 years, I was so shocked by that level of capture. And as we move into the world of AI and media and you talk about how do we know what is true? Oh my God, there's a fair way to go down into the valley, I think, before we emerge the other side.

Damon Gameau [00:16:51] Yeah. That's right. And I think, you know, you touched on a lot of points there around that. I'll come back to that idea of the wound that that is mass consumption. That's what it is. And so once we heal that we realise we are enough, then our extraction will lower as well. And so it is all deeply connected. And also we just have an environment that makes it almost impossible to do the right thing. And I found that even to shoot a film is that you just were bombarded. Our subconscious is bombarded by messaging, by really clever science that understands how our brains work, that tell us we are deficient in things, and we need this to feel better. And so the book about this

called Limbic Capitalism, which is just that we've created this entire system that is triggering dopamine everywhere you turn, whether it's a line or walking down a street that, God forbid, you know, Ardmore or anyone that's able to maintain their health, be that mental or physical in a world that really, when you look at it from a different angle, is quite psychotic, not wise. It is not conducive to a balanced human being and a thriving community and caring and slowing down. It's just going at a frenetic pace and we are ramping that dial up. As you said, with AI and everything that's happening around the world, some of the policies, some of the leaders that are getting into positions of power now, it's all almost a scorched earth policy where it is just kind of consumption turn up the volume. And to me, that's the signs of something nearing its end that it's, that that this is the last stage of, you know, I actually saw an article this morning about, one of the supermarkets that even the groceries. Now you can get an Afterpay option and basic groceries. So I mean, that to me is the last dying stage is that we can commodify even a cost of living crisis. There's an opportunity for an economic advantage for a company to get in it. I mean, that is as distorted as it gets. So. So I think we all feel that. We all know that. We just don't know what the hell to do about it or what comes next. And so, of course, we're going to go for sort of authoritarian figures that tell us that they can fix it and wind back the clock. I get that because we are so unsure about what's coming, but I think somewhere we have to sit in that uncertainty and we have to slow down and surrender to it and trust that what's going to come next will emerge as it does in our own personal lives. I'm sure you've been through something, right? I've been through something myself. Where you are brought these and and linearity stops. The time becomes non-linear. That's when magic comes in. That's when things you never could have predicted start to happen. And I think we're being forced into that because we want a rational, hyper linear outcome to move forward. But that's that's actually that's fooling us. What we have to do in this moment is to surrender and stop to what is and feel the complexity and the uncertainty and then let something else come from that. That's a very hard thing to do collectively.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:19:37] Well, you know, you've said two things that really captured me. One is we are empowered. We are enough. They are two very important messages. But coming back to the regenerative movement, which I know you describe as bringing together a community, taking action to regenerate and heal our planet. And we want to talk about some of those things. I mean, they're called [action areas](#) on the, on the site. And, and let's anticipate some of the naysayers here. Let's address some of the pros and cons too. But let's talk about some of those action areas. And one of them is harmonise the system, which I think we've been talking about. But yeah, know is that is that it is that harmonise the system really about what we've just been discussing or is.

Damon Gameau [00:20:21] Yeah, I mean I think yeah. So what we tried to do was just understand that, you know, when it comes to regeneration or taking action, whether it's with the system or whether it's in landscapes or whether it's trying to fix the environment, everyone's got a different passion or area of interest. And sometimes we've been too prescriptive and just telling everyone what to do. Like, you know, eat less meat or ride your bike to work. And not everyone agrees with that. Not everyone wants to do that. And so we just tried to create this platform where it was very much specifically designed around people's own personal interests. Yeah. So we just tried to create this platform that aligns, I guess, to people's own specific interests so they can find something that they're really passionate about. And that's everything from Whether it's soil and wanting to get back in

agriculture, whether it's in energy, whether it's transport, whether it's landscape repair or oceans, whatever it might be. But there's also a couple of sections there on the bigger systemic issues that we're facing. And how do we start to come together and address those who are the organisations that are working on new systems, or perhaps new models for social media and how we interact that are incentivised by division and tribalization that actually reward people for coming together. So you get more likes if you can solve a problem together, as opposed to being the sole voice in a particular topic. So just really interesting new thinking that's emerging around democracy. For example, in Taiwan, what they're doing now in terms of creating much more transparency around governments and the budgets and policy decisions that are livestreamed. But really interesting things going on around the world that people might not know about. We just wanted to create a database or an area where people can come to, particularly, as we said, as this old system starts to unravel and shows these signs of fragmenting, which it's doing now, rather than people freak out and go, what are we going to do? Send them to somewhere where we can say, you know what? This people that have been working on this stuff for 50, 60 years, these pioneers that now their time has come. Learn about what they've been offering up. Learn about these new models that they've been designing, because, you know, these things aren't as radical when things start to fall apart.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:22:27] Yes. The the interesting part about being live, because I know in education, again, we're coming back to AI. You know, the effect of AI is that, live exams are going to be coming back to universities. You know, you're going to have to sit down in an exam room and show that you are doing it. And I think this is ultimately where democracy, it's interesting to hear something like Taiwan. I mean, I was not aware of that. Yeah, but I love that idea because how will we know if it's real or not? Well, hopefully we can trust the live feed. Yeah. And see exactly what's going on.

Damon Gameau [00:23:04] Yeah. Yeah. It's a really interesting, story to have go too much into it, but it came about because of a protest. The protest is set in the Parliament House, and the lead protester ended up being hired by the government because they set up all these cameras and they live streamed their protest. And the government said, okay, you want to do things differently with us. Let's let's find out how to do this differently. And so they redesigned all their government websites and how they make their decisions. And to me, that sort of stuff is really exciting because it does offer up potentially ways it might not work for every region. We know that and the size of the population all, of course, but at least it shows that human beings are capable of extraordinary thinking when their backs are against the wall. And that, again, is ultimately my hope. I just think right now, so many human beings, I have been blind to what's actually going on. And when I do understand what's happening, we can actually work together and create something really powerful because, I think some of your listeners will understand that, you know, I think most of us are largely altruistic. We are good people that respect each other and want to live in a good community, but we're governed by that very small percentage of largely psychopathic people. And they're setting the rules of the game. And so when we understand that they are trying to keep us divided against each other, when we can find ways to unite, then I think we can really create some powerful change. And I, I just had an experience actually, last couple of weeks where I was very lucky to go to Antarctica, and I was on a boat with 150 people, and it was just almost a microcosm of the world. There were, you know, people that were

complete climate deniers there. They were even flat earthers. They're like really interesting cross-section of people. And I was sort of representing the climate story. But it was terrific to have face to face discussions with these people that were deniers, and then to hear where their perspective was coming from, how they got to their point of view for me to be able to share mine. And then we found that we actually probably had 95% of things in common. It might have been a couple of things we're going to disagree on, but largely we felt as frustrated by the system, as desperate for change, as wanting a better future for our children as each other. And yet, if we met a lot, we probably think we were at the other end of the spectrum. So I think this is really important to understand, that certainly from my travels that we have so much in common as human beings, and we are just being grotesquely misled by a very small group of, of powerful people with lots of money, keys to the kingdom. And they are, they are having their way with us and, no more. It's time to to reclaim over and power ourselves, as you said.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:25:36] Yeah, yeah. Well, I share your optimism about humanity. I mean, that's sounds an odd thing to say this particular time, but I believe that because people ultimately want the best for themselves, their families, their children, their grandchildren, and no one wants to live in a dirty home, a dirty city, a dirty country, a dirty world. I mean, I think that's commonality, whether you're a climate denier or not. That's this is obviously what some of the. Things that you you found in face to face. How fantastic. I mean, energy is one of those issues, isn't it, that we hear so much about and, and I guess, you know, with good reason in some ways. I mean, in the sense that, I mean, I'm a huge fan of solar, you know, I've got solar panels on my roof. My car is a plug in hybrid. You know, I barely buy petrol because of that. But what happens to my house? What goes into making those solar panels? What happens to those solar panels when I no longer need to use them? Yeah. This is part of the challenge in this rethinking of energy, isn't it?

Damon Gameau [00:26:45] Yeah, yeah it is. And I think, the reality is that we've created such a massive system now. I mean, it's such an extraordinarily complicated global system that requires massive amounts of energy that no matter what we do, we're going to be causing damage to the planet. Now, it's it's just so big. But I think what my research has certainly showed me is that, there's no doubt the 21st century was was the century of oil in the century, fossil fuels. And these companies made extraordinary amounts of money and continue to today. And they've been very good at deflecting some of the awareness of them onto other, technologies. And, and this year, this this is all documented there, right back to the 50s. Exxon themselves were doing all sorts of planning back then about renewables and then realised and doubled down on on the denial. But I think what's interesting, even with the renewables discussion is if you look at the amount of renewables we're going to require in 2040 to power the whole economy, which is still an enormous amount of mining, often in countries that we shouldn't be mining the Congo and these kind of parts of the world, it's about 28 million tons of resources. So silicon and copper and all these materials we need. But the fossil fuel industry extracts 15 billion tons a year. So 15 billion versus 28 million now 15 billion tons is destroying our atmosphere, is destroying our ocean, is damaging animals, all sorts of things. And yet they've done a brilliant job of saying, well, hang on, we've got to build all these things. And and they're right. But it's a brilliant deflection tactic from the damage that they are actually doing themselves. And yes, we're going to have to rebuild, these kind of materials. My hope is that it's happening quite quickly, that

even the design, the DNA of some of these materials make them renewable. So the big turbines now, recyclable, 96% of them can be recycled. So in the best case scenario is we develop remanufacturing industries that take these big renewable things, break them down and rebuild them and, and put them out there again. And there's again examples of that. Countries like Japan have done that around certain precious metals that recycle 99% of the metals, because they created jobs for people to take apart washing machines and toasters and phones and reused the materials so we could do it with the right policies. It's just that some of these big industries have been so good since the 70s at just smashing any kind of environmental regulation, any kind of threat to their constant perpetual growth they require. They've just been savage and brilliant at kind of shaping the narrative around that and ruling it as some kind of big government, you know, social socialism experiment where sometimes it's the government just saying, no, no, we want clean water for our citizens. But all that's been hijacked and as you know, some in the food industry, some of these, these large corporations now have more power than our own governments and their own democracies. These clauses that the trade treaties, the ISDs clauses where a company can sue a government if it threatens to breach that their profits or impact their profits. And there's countless stories of of companies suing governments for billions of dollars, and the government can't fight the case. And so they just build and trash the bit of coast or the deal, the coal mine on the river, whatever it might be. So this is a big problem, you know, not just environmentally, but for our health, for all sorts of things, that we have the illusion of democracy right now. But the reality is that we are living in a, in a sort of a corporate technocracy that is, a financial fascism, if you want to call it, that's actually sits above our governments and is and is plundering the planet and plundering our own health.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:30:21] Corporate technocracy. I've kind of seen it as corporate socialism often, too. Or corporate communism, you know, like when you talk to people in America. Oh, national health, my God, we're not a communist country, but but a company goes down and they're too big to fail, right? They're too big to fail. And they see no irony in this. Interestingly, though, Damien, I think, you know, the tobacco, the it's called the tobacco playbook. Yeah. Because they knew in the 1940s that tobacco was bad. But it wasn't until 2006 that the government actually, legislated that it was an addictive thing. So, you know, and it's interesting to the what's something we never hear about is the IMF did a report on fossil. Fuel subsidies tried and found they get a subsidy of 5.6 trillion USD a year. Yeah, which is equivalent to \$10 million a minute. And we've been talking for 20 minutes. So while we've been talking, the fossil fuel industry has gained \$200 million in subsidies. So. That's right. We never hear about that.

Damon Gameau [00:31:26] No. And yet we call it a free market. All these people are proponents of a free market. And again, that's just an illusion. It's just it's it's a joke. It's a rhetoric that we all buy. And it's just nonsense. And so, you know, let's see what would really happen if you didn't subsidise renewables and fossil fuels, like the renewable energy would actually roll out at a much faster rate because it's cheaper now. That said, I think, you know, again, the complexity of this topic is is vast. As you know, there is a reason we subsidise some fossil fuels, and it does make a cost of living cheaper for people or petrol or our farmers. So it's not as simple as just saying, all right, let's just eradicate all these things because that would actually be quite deleterious. We have to be careful around this stuff. As we found I think it was at Sri Lanka a couple of years ago when they said, we're going to go

organic, we're just going to ban fertilisers without any kind of proper thought through structure. And of course, the farmers revolted. Of course they protested. And it was just a disastrous move because these things take time. The landscape needs time or years to get off its addiction to some of these fertilisers and said, we need to support people in this transition if we're going to do this. And and that's where we need a thriving democracy and a functioning, robust government. But as you said, so many of them have been captured by higher powers that they don't want to do this. They're all receiving funding from these same industries that are doing the damage. So it becomes illusory in terms of of this actually being a democracy.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:32:51] The other one that I know you passionate about, and I'm certainly I'm we've had so many wonderful guests on our program in the regenerative agriculture field. And this reviving of soils, is a big one. I mean, we've had [Joel Salatin](#) and [Alan Savoury](#), [Terry McCosker](#), [Charlie Massey](#). Right. [Charlie Arnott](#). You know, I mean, they're just heroes to me. And I just think they, you know, and when Charlie Massey says, rather than dominating nature, we should enable it. I mean, this is another major focus for you.

Damon Gameau [00:33:23] Well, it's the perfect you're saying before how to describe regeneration. I think what's happening in the soils and farming is the perfect metaphor, in that we take an industrialised system that is extractive, dominates nature, controls nature through, you know, control the weeds, control the pests, and then regenerative agriculture gets rid of all those things and lets the natural immune system of soil kick in to do all the right things. And then you get this incredible, staggering amount of life that comes back to the soil, which then feeds the plants, which then goes into our guts, which feeds the diversity in our guts. And so that, to me sums up the perfect analogy of a monoculture that destroys life versus a thriving regenerative life that brings it back. So, that's why I feel so passionate about that. And in fact, the film I just I just finished, which will be coming out later this year, I took this group of children around Europe, to, to meet some CEOs and to learn about nature. And one of the things we did was visit this regeneration, landscape where the kids were able to go into this big monoculture wheat field. We took some soil samples, we took the temperature there, and then we went into this big agro forestry set up where they grown all their food with diverse crops and healthy soil. And we measured the temperature, what was being transported up, and we radiated back into the atmosphere. But then I showed them under the microscope the difference in the soil. And the kids were just like, because of the amount of life. And then, you know, these the soil scientists were explaining to them that, yeah, you might eat a tomato from both those fields, but look at the life in the tomato from the agroforestry versus the monoculture. You'd have to it smells the same and it looks the same, but you'd have to eat ten tomatoes to get the same level of nutrients that you got from the agroforestry soil. So just trying to get that message to people, because then, you know, regenerative agriculture has all sorts of benefits for water retention for the climate. But if we can get people in the front door through the food story, which is, hey, this is really good for your gut health and whatnot, then I think we're going to bring more people on board. It almost becomes a gateway drug. Use the food as a as a way in for people to start understanding about the environmental benefits of this type of farming. And again, there's still division over it. It's still not, a panacea because we need to work with farmers that have got agronomists in the area. And I've done a certain way of farming for years that's produced so much about food for us. So they did it, as we

know, they work their absolute butts off, to get that food to us. And I've done a great service. So we've got to be careful again about just kind of dismissing them as wrong. And hey, we've got to pick up this new form of farming that kind of, denies all the great work that they've done to get us to this point. It's just that our learning is shifting now. So how do we bring them along that journey? How do we subsidise them and send. To revise them to start changing their practices rather than vilifying them, which is, you know, I think an error we made with the fossil fuel workers, we just dismiss them instead of saying, hey, you guys powered our entire economy for 150 years and created all sorts of jobs and wealth for us. Thanks, but we've learned this new thing now, how can we escort you and retrain you into jobs of the future? So I think we just have to do that in a lot of industries in the next decade or so, whether it's the automotive industry, the creative industries we're seeing with AI, there is disruption coming. And how do we do it in the most humane way where we do heal that wound we talked about, and we do it in the best way we can.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:36:44] I often feel that people who, very, reluctant to change feel that, a change is a rejection of the past rather than a springboard to the future. And, you know, I think that is, I love the fact that, you know, why not honour what has gone before and what has been created, but say, hey, the world has changed, and now we need to use that as a springboard moving forward.

Damon Gameau [00:37:11] You know, well, that's what we if we weren't governed by largely sociopaths, that's what we'd be doing, I say. You know, it's it's and again.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:37:17] I guess I only wish that wasn't true. Right.

Damon Gameau [00:37:21] And as we said, when when the incentive of this system is purely, you know, extraction, financial growth, then then humans get discarded and anything nature gets discarded. As you said before, we don't embed the true cost of anything because we've just got this narrow focus of our success, which is just madness, because we're not seeing the impact that that financial growth has on human beings and living beings and the planet. And unless we address that, you know, we are going to fly off a cliff. We have to look at new ways of what we measure. What do we value? We should be looking at the soil health on the nightly news. We should be looking at atmospheric pollution, the well-being of a community. Once we put those as metrics, we want to strive for more people that we visible and we'll talk about it more will solve problems. But right now we're just looking at the stock exchange, and we're just ignoring all the externalities that that allow that stock exchange to increase which which is crazy.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:38:14] Yeah. No, no, I mean, Charlie Massey talks about five cycles of, solar and sun and water and biodiversity, but he makes the point that the fifth cycle is the most important one, and that is the human social cycle, which is exactly what you're addressing. You've got a film coming

out at the end of the year. I mean, that's an interesting what is it? What is what are you calling it? What when is it being released?

Damon Gameau [00:38:37] Yeah. So release date is not exactly sure yet, but probably I think July, August. And, it's called Future Council. And, I took eight children between the ages of 11 and 13 from eight different countries. And they're all young environmentalists in their own way. Whether it's ocean plastics and recycling they do, or fast fashion or climate, whatever it might be, and put them together. I drove this yellow school bus across Europe, basically to get them to meet some of the most powerful leaders in the world. And we met the CEOs, at Nestlé. And as a really big bank in Europe, and the children got to air their concerns and have these discussions. And then we also swam in glacial lakes in Switzerland on the way they played in the forests of Belgium, had this real rite of passage learning around nature. And then the kids, as we went along, formed this idea of this future council, where they would go and address these large organisations and collaborate with them so they didn't have to protest on the streets. They could actually get into the boardrooms. And they then invited another thousand children that had auditioned for the film and then held their own future council. And so, what we're doing now is raising money through various philanthropists and organisations to, to bring this future council alive so that, you know, hopefully there's a million or so kids in there in the next few years who all feel like they're in power. They're networking with each other, they're learning terrific skills about the future, and we're shaping the leaders of the future. And what are the skills they're going to need? How do they connect with each other? How do they make decisions collectively? All those things. So yeah, it's been yeah, probably one of the more special projects I've ever done just because the children, as you say in the film, I just. Extraordinary and beautiful and so insightful and emotionally brave in what they present. They do a lot of the grieving that I think adults are unable to do about the state of the world and where we're at. But I just share it in such a beautiful way that isn't, you know, aggressive or in-your-face. It's just a very vulnerable, thing to do. But they're also, you know, very clever, very witty. And so it's sort of a fun adventure. It's a road trip across Europe, where they're teaching me things. I'm teaching them things. And yeah, certainly probably one of the most special projects I've ever done.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:40:51] Wow, wow. And what a great follow on from the [2040](#). Yeah. You know, story to take it back to the future. Back to the future kids to.

Damon Gameau [00:41:00] Yeah, back.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:41:01] To the kids. How wonderful. Another theme that we've explored on this podcast, and you will know her very well, [Helena Norberg-Hodge](#), from [Local Futures](#) and this whole story of local versus global. And I know you touch on that a lot in your film 2040. And I'm assuming you will you know, it's part of the action areas local and global. How do you think we're going? I mean, I would have hoped would learn to big lesson in the pandemic and how important that was.

Damon Gameau [00:41:31] Yeah. What do you what.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:41:32] Do you see?

Damon Gameau [00:41:33] I see this in inevitability. I see that, you know, there's so much inertia in the current system now, and it is so incredibly globalised. But as we found in the, in, in Covid, the, the fragility of our system, it's just laid bare that, that it's wound so tight for efficient efficiency to maximise every dollar, to get a cargo ship to land in a country right on time. So those bananas are ripe at the right moment when it does have a disruption, which we're going to get more and more of, we're already seeing it now in the Red sea and what's happening there. But also, you know, we've more climate shocks, more geopolitical shocks that are definitely going to come, that fragility is going to be even more exposed. So how do we shore up our own sovereignty, around our energy, around our food, in our own countries? And this is a very delicate balance, because, as we know, there's a there's the temptation to tip into nationalism there. And the whole reason that this global interconnected sea that, set up was established was largely to avoid conflict, you know, post World War two, so that, you know, economic sanctions and trade was a way to keep us all at peace. So there's a real risk when we do start to localise of of what might happen there. But I think people, intrinsically feel that, that, that localisation is the way to go because they understand their community. They know the people in the community, they understand the needs of that community, the particular weather types. And I think they're sick of decisions about their community being made by transnational corporations or by governments that, of hundreds of kilometres away. They want more of a say about their region. And I think in Australia, we've seen that, with particularly the rise of the independent movement of people say, we're really sick of this two party captured system. What about we offer up, Jeanette, who used to work at the local CWA? Actually, she'd be good in Parliament. What do you know? She's got into Parliament. So to me, that is, that's regenerative democracy, that's localisation. And I think we're going to be forced into that more and more in the future, as we realise we can't just push a button and get some kind of food sent to us within 24 hours, which again, is kind of madness that we're going to have to start sourcing. Sourcing what locally, we're gonna have to start getting to know our neighbours in a way that we haven't done for the last 30 or 40 years. We've been so hyper individualised that we've lost that community feeling, and that's who we are. That's how we've evolved, is in groups of people that share, and anyone that's experienced that knows how much better it feels when you've got that community support, real human beings that are interacting with you and sharing meals or dancing or helping with your kids. It just feels good. And that's that wound again that we've come full circle to. That's healing that wound again. That's where we do feel better when we have that. We don't crave all these dopamine hits. We don't crave all this consumption or this feeling of being part of a community that's online, which, again, is an illusion because we're not really part of that. You know, we don't really know those people. We want it. We want it to feel it. We want the real version of that. So to me, that's where we're headed, whether we want to or not. I think the system itself, is forcing us down. And that's, you know, we talk about regenerative agriculture. That's how nature works. It is like the mycelial network, these little cells that all connect up to make something larger. They're not all homogenised. They're not all Starbucks and McDonald's everywhere around the world. That's not how it works. It's very specific to a region that it's founded. And I think that's kind of who we are as human beings or what we want in our local

communities. A real diversity, a mix of people and things that make us unique in our region. And then we connect up with a region. It's new to us. They have their own set, but we have to find a way to get along with those people, interact and share resources. But that's where I think it might take us some time because we're. We've been so hyper individualised that reconnecting those bonds where you weaving those connections is going to take a little bit of work, because we're not used to it, and there's been such damage done that we've broken our trust. We've been told that we're deeply divisive. We watch shows like survivor, where it's all, you know, survival of the fittest. My dream is that that show survivor, was about a group of people that had to work together to all survive on an island, not to see who was going to be the last one standing, because that's the type of thinking, well, that's the type of storytelling we're going to need moving forward. That old thing of, of, you know, the sole person that's going to make it is, is just nonsense. We're not going to change if we don't change that thinking. We have to find a way to surrender and work better with each other.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:46:01] Now, could I could not agree more with you. And, and I think when I think about technology and I think about globalisation, I feel like we're like kids in a sweet in a, in a sweet shop. You know, we're very excited about all the possibilities. And that excitement is gone on for about ten, 15, maybe 20 years. But, if the evidence is anything to go by and we constantly told evidence based is where we live, well, if the evidence is anything to go by, mental health, environmental degradation, you know, preventable chronic diseases, the evidence would suggest that isn't probably the best way to go, you know?

Damon Gameau [00:46:37] And, actually, there was a quite a well-known American, called Charles Monger, who died recently. He was asked about, you know, how do you predict the future? He said something around, if you show me the incentives and I'll be able to predict the future. And that's my big concern. AI is that if it's embedded with the same incentives that our system has now, which it does, all it's going to do is accelerate what we already have. And what we're already doing is fragmenting society, unravelling democracy, destroying the living world that I always like pouring petrol under the fire in terms of maximising efficiency, like so I you know, I don't know, no one really knows what that what that outcome is. But part of me feels like there's a, a subconscious, summoning of this kind of digital deity that either is going to solve our problems that we hope for, or it's going to accelerate us to a demise so we can start again. You know, I don't. I don't see a positive outcome for this. I do see eventually positive outcome, but I see again a problematic time just because I don't trust the incentives of the system. It's not designed to bring us together and to optimise for the best. It's designed to grab our attention, to keep us on law and to divide us and the incentives that have been baked into AI. So, yeah, I have real concerns for that. My hope is that I think we'll get to a point maybe in the next five years where, gosh, it'll be harder to trust anything on the internet. Maybe that'll be so hard to delineate between deepfake videos. What's real? There are a lot of forces to put down our phones, fuel a lot, trust online and rebuild those communities, or again, force us to go. Hang on. Is this. This is not working for us. What are new ways we can use this remarkable technology, to do things differently? Design new systems, new social platforms. I hope that's what it pushes up. But I do think, like you said, we've got the new toy we need to play with or play with it for a while, but we haven't realised it's going to burn our hands yet. But when it does, we'll drop it and then work out how

to redesign it. But again, that's all speculative. I have no idea. No one has any idea. But it's just incredible unknown territory where we're venturing into.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:48:48] But, you know, your [regenerator](#) site, or movement is certainly a positive. As, as I've said, was the film, as a way of bringing people into and, and directing them in it in a way where they can actually do something about it. If someone was listening to this well, and was wanting to, you know, the kind of, wow, this this is really what I mean. I would hope that many of my listeners would be well aware of many of these topics, but let's say, you know, they weren't. And what would you say they could do to get started on this themselves? What would be some advice?

Damon Gameau [00:49:22] Well, I think that's that's why we built the platform actually was to sort of say to people, if you really are at the starting point, you don't know where to go, what you're interested in. There's actually we've we've created an action plan so you can hit this button there that says start regenerating. And then we ask you a series of questions about what you are interested in. You get to look at some topics and click on different things. Ask how much time you have available. How you'd like to help. And then we offer up 10 or 12 things that you can do that align directly to your own personal interests. So again, we get away from this sort of googling the top five things to do to help the system. Now let's be more prescriptive than that and actually really aligned to what people's passions are. So that's where I would encourage. And we've just linked to so many organisations, the around the world, the different community groups that you can get involved with, of people that are sort of waking up to this stuff and starting to take it really seriously and doing extraordinary things. And as I said before, whether it's in region AG or whether it's in, you know, different regenerative practices, is it regenerative fashion movement, regenerative economics movement, regenerative democracy movement? There's so much going on around the world. It's just I don't I don't get to cut through that. I'll get the traction again because it's such a hopeful and positive message. But they are out there. And I think that some once you start seeing them, you will does open up because you've sort you've been looking at this really myopic lens, just at how terrible the world is. And suddenly you go, oh, hang on a minute. There's all these other people that deeply care, that really want to do something and are getting on with it and doing it, finding money to grow their businesses or do different ways to to amplify their work. But but it is happening all around the world.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:50:57] Well, Damon, thank you so much for not only all that you've done and are doing, but for joining us today and sharing that vision and, that platform for collaboration moving forward. Thank you so much.

Damon Gameau [00:51:10] Good on you, Ron. Thanks for having me.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:51:12] Well, as I said at the beginning of the episode, what I love about Damon's work is that it's not just about the doom and gloom. It's a vision of the future and a framework for us

all to contribute and get involved in whatever area of interest you are interested in. And as I said, I would encourage you to go back and listen to the episode with [Helena Norberg-Hodge](#), another hero of mine who for over 40 years has been championing the power of local communities. Look, I feel so passionate about what Damon feels passionate about. I thought I'd share with you this trailer of [Regenerating Australia 2030](#). We leave you with a look back at the highlights of a remarkable decade that has changed Australia forever.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:52:07] The 2020s began in extraordinary fashion.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:52:19] Work more regionally. More work. More opportunity. Tolerant.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:52:23] That place would be ideal. I've been a sustainable cities like.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:52:29] Today marked the first time that Australia has run on 90% renewable energy for an entire month. That makes me feel really, really happy. The government today announced it will follow the lead of all the countries and live stream key policy discussions. I think it's good and we need transparency. The Australians are now seeking out Australian made in Orange products. The ripple effect is that we are now seeing healthy farmers.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:52:56] There's nothing like endangered animals.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:52:58] You know that landscape is coming back to life. To give all Australians a real happy.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:53:04] We can deal better with the world when we're connected to nature. It's been amazing to see the change that's happened from the closure of the power stations to the renewable energy zones. The young people are starting to stay and find work. This family right now are earning cash because their electricity service provider are paying them to use the battery in this unit as storage for the grid.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:53:27] In a decade full of transition and tragedy, many Australians are finding renewed purpose in the regeneration of our social and ecosystems. Australians are starting to feel more secure.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:53:40] This is a landmark day for our country.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:53:43] A day like this means that all of this work is actually made something. Respect is back. Yeah, pride is respecting the environment. From that gives us.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:53:54] The strength to look to.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:53:55] A brighter future.

Regenerating Australia Trailer [00:53:57] If not me, who? If not now, when do we do it? And it's never too late to stand up and take action together.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:54:19] Inspiring stuff. Remember the regenerators.org. I hope this finds you well. Until next time. This is doctor Ron Ehrlich. Be Well.

Dr Ron Ehrlich [00:54:30] This podcast provides general information and discussion about medicine, health, and related subjects. The content is not intended and should not be construed as medical advice, or as a substitute for care by a qualified medical practitioner. If you or any other person has a medical concern, he or she should consult with an appropriately qualified medical practitioner. Guests who speak in this podcast express their own opinions, experiences and conclusions.