

Max Karson  
2/23/22

**Additional information regarding my complaint (ID- XX) against Dr. Alok Kanojia**

**Please find the included thumb drive containing the following files and folders:**

Dr. K: Reckless [A documentary produced by me assembling some of his more unethical behavior along with expert interviews]

Byron Bernstein (Reckful) [A folder containing all six quasi-therapy sessions between Kanojia and Bernstein]

Dr. Kanojia quasi-therapy sessions [A folder containing an additional 140 quasi-therapy sessions conducted by Dr. Kanojia]

Documents [A folder containing this document as well as my original complaint, ID - XX]

All interview video files are named with the title given to them by Dr. Kanojia when he published them on YouTube.

**Transcript excerpts from Dr. Kanojia's Sessions with Bernstein:**

Dr. Kanojia did six live "therapy" sessions with Bernstein from December 2019 to February 2020. These were broadcast to thousands of people, while both parties received live commentary and thousands of dollars in donations from the audience.

They have since been published to YouTube where they have earned thousands of more dollars for Dr. Kanojia.

As noted in my initial complaint, Bernstein committed suicide on July 2, 2020.

During this time, Bernstein resided in Austin, TX, and Dr. Kanojia resided in Massachusetts, the only state where he was/is licensed to practice medicine.

The following exchanges are excerpted from their sessions.

**Session 1 (12/4/2019)**

**Filename: "1- Talking Depression with Reckful"**

*This was their first introduction. Bernstein described a lifelong history of depression, including a suicide attempt, as well as his brother's suicide when he was a child.*

[at 1:10:45]

Dr. Kanojia: I started streaming about two-and-a-half months ago, and you know I was advised against doing that by a lot of people, like many of my colleagues... hopefully I don't get sued, cause I'm not really delivering medical care but, you know, what happens if someone comes on stream and then kills themselves or something like that...?

Bernstein: I'll try not to kill myself anytime soon for you.

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah, thank you, I appreciate that, I'm serious.

Bernstein: No problem, I, actually I haven't thought about killing myself since psilocybin, I think.

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah, I believe that. If you do happen to have those thoughts again, feel free to reach out. You have my Discord.

[Discord is a video game-focused messaging app]

Dr. Kanojia [cont'd]: Yeah, I will say, you know you can die, but not until you've done what you need to for that five-year-old. [He is referring to Bernstein's internal child self.]

## **Session 2 (12/18/2019)**

### **Filename: "2- Talking Depression with Reckful pt 2"**

*By the end of this session, they agreed to meet online regularly at weekly intervals, either on Twitch or privately. (They did speak at least once privately.)*

[at 1:16:01]

Dr. Kanojia: Reckful, do you have a therapist?

Bernstein: I've gone to therapy a few times, but I never saw it as useful enough to keep going. This time I do. Well, okay, this is not "therapy." [He makes air quotes with his fingers.]

Dr. Kanojia (laughing): Yeah... so, okay so look, look man so this is what we got to do. So either, so I think this is way more longitudinal... we got to figure something out, so either you need to talk to someone about this... or like I can't do one offs, like we can do one offs about meditation and random shit, but if you really want to get into this, if you want to get into the loneliness, we got to do it like in sequence, like we got to do it sequentially...

Bernstein: I'm fine with that.

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah so let's, let me just think about that, it doesn't have to be online, but you know, if you want to do it online, that's fine but then I think we have to do it consistently—

Bernstein: How consistently?

Dr. Kanojia: I mean, I would say probably every week for like four to eight weeks.

Bernstein: That's not that long... I'm willing to do that.

### **Session 3 (1/11/2020)**

#### **Filename: "3 - Dr. K talks with Reckful about Family and Psychedelics"**

*In this session, Dr. Kanojia and Bernstein discussed the effect of Bernstein's brother's suicide on his family, and subsequently on Bernstein. They also discussed Bernstein's apparent dependence psilocybin.*

*Dr. Kanojia also explains that he likes to ask his patients to step barefoot in dog feces.*

[at 1:21:10]

Dr. Kanojia: So when we meditate. actually we're just sitting with an experience fully, and that's why ... mindful eating or like mindful like instagramming or mindfully like watching the sunset is so great, because like the more that you just do something without like your mind a tributing a value judgment to it—so my favorite exercise is that I ask my patients to step in dog shit. So we work our way up to—

Bernstein: Really.

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah, barefoot... I like that, because ... the experience of stepping in dog shit is not bad, right, like the actual sensation of stepping in dog shit is not bad... actually it's probably kind of smushy in a nice way... it's just like if you stick your toe in the mud...

### **Session 4 (1/23/2020)**

#### **Filename: "4 - Dr. K Talks with Reckful about Loneliness and Abandonment"**

*In this session, Dr. Kanojia quasi-diagnosed Bernstein with borderline personality disorder and told him that his BPD could be cured if he gets into a loving relationship for two years. He then offers to love Bernstein himself for a period of two years. (On 2/2/2020, Bernstein announced on Twitter that he'd been diagnosed with BPD—to my knowledge and the knowledge of those close to him, he did not see any other mental health professional during this time.)*

[at 37:05]

Dr. Kanojia: I'm gonna share a little bit of data. I want to be very clear about this. I'm gonna talk to you about something called borderline personality disorder. I don't think you have this, by the way, it's not my place to diagnose you...

Bernstein: Really? Okay, a lot of people think I do have that.

Dr. Kanojia: Maybe you do, I don't know. So I don't have enough diagnostic... so I'm gonna just talk a little bit about borderline personality disorder because I think that there's some features of it which are relevant, and also like some very interesting data that some people don't know. So the first is that borderline personality disorder, a lot of times these people have a fear of abandonment, and so they do get overly clingy, and as they get overly clingy they sort of like force people away, and then it kind of like reinforces their fear that like they're unlovable.

[at 38:08]

Dr. Kanojia: So, a lot of people think of BPD as being incurable, but there's a there's some really fascinating data that if you can get in a stable relationship for two years and have someone not abandon you, then there's a 50% chance your BPD will, like, actually go away.

[at 45:01]

Dr. Kanojia: So like, what did we manage to do for our two-year-old that never happened for you?

Bernstein: You gave the two-year-old enough attention.

Dr. Kanojia: Absolutely, yeah, and I think that's what you need... You need someone in your life who's not going to turn away for a period of at least two years, and you may be terrified that they'll turn away at two-point-five, right—

Bernstein: I might never get it... I mean there's no guarantee I will, but I'll look for it.

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah, so sure there is. There's only one way...

Bernstein: I would not say so... I've gotten in some really unhealthy situations because I'm so desperate for human interaction that I have, you know, paid people's rent just so they'd be my roommate... or try to get them to quit their jobs and I give them a new job that requires less time so I could have a friend, and obviously I've realized that these things are unhealthy, but I was just in desperate situations where I needed human interaction—

Dr. Kanojia: So, Reckful, I am confident... I'm confident there's gonna be someone around in your life who will be there for you most of the time when you need them, hopefully for at least a period of two years.

Bernstein: Okay.

Dr. Kanojia: How can I be confident in that?

Bernstein: How can you be confident... well, you probably you find me stimulating to talk to, and I'm not demanding too much of your time or spamming you with walls of text, and even if I were, you'd feel inclined to answer me because it's, you love helping people, it's your passion, so from your perspective maybe you can feel confident, but then if you put yourself in the shoes of any other human being, I don't know that they'll really spend two years with me, unless there's...

Dr. Kanojia: So Reckful, I'm not counting on them to spend two years with you.

Bernstein: What are you counting on?

Dr. Kanojia: I'm counting on myself.

Bernstein: ...oh that you'll spend two years with me... that I believe, that I can believe.

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah, so I can't trust any of them.

Bernstein: True... It's nice having someone to come to every week like this.

Dr. Kanojia: I'm gonna try to love you for two years. At a minimum.

Bernstein: I really appreciate it.

### **Session 5 (1/29/2020)**

#### **Filename: "5 - Distracted to Focused Mind with Dr.K Ft. Reckful"**

*In this session, Dr. Kanojia prompted Bernstein to tell the audience about a private session they had during the previous week, in which Dr. Kanojia informed Bernstein that he had made a mistake when he promised to love him for two years.*

*Bernstein asks for clarification about whether Dr. Kanojia is his friend or his doctor. Dr. Kanojia redirects him to do a breathing exercise instead of clarifying the relationship.*

[at 2:17]

Dr. Kanojia: The last time we talked on stream, we had a conversation about abandonment, and then I made a very bold claim because I got emotional as well, and I felt like I wanted to be there for you so that you no longer felt this way, and I think sometimes what happens amongst people is that they have different kinds of complexes, and I have them too, and one of the things

that happens with me is when I see someone hurting, I want to make them better and sometimes I will, in that moment, say whatever I think I can to make them feel better. But sometimes that's irresponsible, and ... I think from our perspective, we're trying to understand, you know, like, what is this for you, what is this for me, what are we doing on Twitch--this is like, kind of a new thing, and I think a common perception is that if you're talking about feelings with someone, then that is therapy...

You can talk to another human being about feelings and you can explore things that are authentic and important to yourself, and that doesn't necessarily make you a therapist. And so we were also talking about the other options in terms of like, what are we? Are we like, colleagues ... that stream on Twitch together? We'd sort of talked a little bit about, you know, things like viewership and stuff like that. I raised some concerns about favoritism--so I want to try to treat people equally, and I just wanted to kind of acknowledge that if one person is coming on stream over and over again, are we doing a disservice to other people--

Bernstein: I think I shouldn't come on stream over and over again with you every week, yeah.

Dr. Kanojia: So I think that that too, for me, feels like it's closer to a doctor-patient relationship, which I think becomes really complicated if you're kind of working with someone week after week, you know and I think the other thing that we expressed is that, like, so I want to be Reckful's friend, right, so but, if I'm, if I'm your friend then, can I be your doctor? Do I want to be your doctor, do I want to be your friend? ...

I tend to tangle up relationships with people, I tend to not see things in terms of black and white, and ... that's part of the reason I started streaming anyway, because, like ... no therapist or psychiatrist has come live on stream to like, talk to people about mental health or their feelings, or maybe it does happen and I just haven't heard of it, but I think that's a little bit unorthodox. And so we basically had a conversation about, like, what are the bounds of our relationship?

...

[at 6:50]

Bernstein: He was saying that he wanted to be there for me for the next few years, and that he, but, but, the problem is, kind of said it in a flurry, flurry of emotion? ...he was getting emotional himself, he wanted to be there for me, so he said it, but he hadn't actually thought it through, and what that entails because he is not a licensed therapist in Texas, and just a lot of things you know, how you'd have to live in Texas to be my therapist in Texas is how it works--

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah, so we also did talk about, you know whether you want me to be your actual therapist, and what that would entail, and the other thing is that bit of research, which is

important to remember, is the the research on people on BPD—it's two years of someone who's actually a romantic partner, so it's unclear whether a friend—

Bernstein: Yeah, I need to get in a relationship with a girl for two years and have it actually work out, and that might cure my BPD.

[at 8:43]

Dr Kanojia: So, some of the trauma of losing your brother, one brother, and then another brother, like you're terrified that like, you'll lose someone else...so I think what we need to help you do is like, use meditation or psilocybin or however you want to, but to gain perspective on those moments and essentially ride out those emotions so that you can like, not do something that negatively impacts the relationship. So we need to help—

Bernstein: My, my mind is stuck on certain things right now.

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah, tell me.

Bernstein: So, I'm stuck on—I like to get these things solved... I don't like to be in the tension.

Dr. Kanojia: Beautiful.

Bernstein: Yeah, so, I'm in the tension of—is he gonna be my therapist, or are we gonna be friends? Because he said if he's my therapist, we can never travel together anywhere. Like it changes how it is... I was thinking it'd be cool to go to Japan with Dr. K, sounds nice—

Dr. Kanojia; Yeah.

Bernstein: Just see how he experiences things and have fun... so I really want a friend, but, you know, I'm thinking longer-term, I'll have friends. So what I need is a therapist maybe.

Dr. Kanojia: Yeah, so, I think rather than resolve that issue, Reckful, I think the important thing is that you said something really really beautiful, right, which is that you do not like the tension.

## **Session 6 (2/12/2020)**

### **Filename: "6 - Dr. K Talks with Reckful about Good Mental Health"**

*In this last session together, Bernstein told Dr. Kanojia that everything is going well in his life and that it is all thanks to Dr. Kanojia.*

*For example, Bernstein told Dr. Kanojia that he can ruminate on one statement by Dr. Kanojia for 10 hours, and that this is the equivalent of 10 hours of therapy. Dr. Kanojia passively agreed.*

*They made a vague plan to continue talking in private. I don't have any information about whether that happened or what was said.*

**Dr. Kanojia Public Statement on Bernstein's Suicide (7/4/2020)**

**Filename: "7 - On Grief, Loss, & Suicide Dr. K explains"**

*Dr. Kanojia gave a tearful speech about how Bernstein lost his battle with depression, despite having "six sessions with Dr. K." He also gave disclaimers about the livestreams not being intended to be medical advice or therapy.*